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# MANITOU ISLAND

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BY

M. G. McCLELLAND

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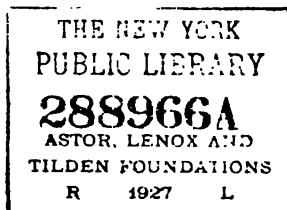
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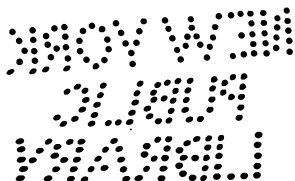
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TO  
MY THREE LOVED ONES,  
**Mother, Father, and Sister,**  
I DEDICATE THIS STORY.

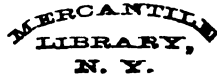


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# MANITOU ISLAND.

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## CHAPTER I.

### BROTHERS-IN-LAW.

"WHICH way now, Trigg?"

The questioner, an elderly man, Robin Hunter by name, slouched forward, with his elbows on his knees, and gazed over the edge of the wharf. He was seated on a pile of cordwood that had lain in the weather for so many months that the clean split pine had been toned down to a hue in unison with the murkiness of the atmosphere and the sodden aspect of the marsh. Below him, with her nose rubbing against the water-sogged wooden piers, lay a small boat in which lounged another man.

Against the gunwale of the boat a gun rested, and in the bottom, close to the rower's bench, lay a string of frog-legs, some snipe, and a brace or two of ducks. The boatman had been enjoying his sport away in the marsh. He stooped over,

lifted the game, and passed it up to the man on the wharf, who heaped it into a rough splint basket.

Hunter, diverted for the moment from his original inquiry, paused with the bunch of frog-legs in his hand, weighing it, with a slight upward movement, and pinching the flesh between a knowing thumb and forefinger.

"How many?" he demanded, as he finally deposited them in the basket.

"Sixty—or thereabouts. I promised you a good lot. There they are."

"Thank'ee," Hunter responded, then added, with a change of tone, "till I pay you better."

Trigg Bartram lifted himself up, and stood resting his elbows on the edge of the wharf. His slouch hat was pulled low, almost to the brows, shadowing the brooding dark eyes, and the hard outlines of the mouth and chin. His blue hunting-shirt was loose at the collar and from it rose a superb throat, smooth and rounded like a woman's, but tanned by sun and wind to the delicate brownness of a roebuck. His hands were brown also, a deeper tint, and well shaped, with rather long, muscular fingers; the right hand showed, on back and palm, scars, as though from knife or pistol wounds.

The tide of the distant sea had turned and was flowing up the estuary and into the marsh. The boat rocked and lifted with the motion of the water, and the young fellow, standing firmly, on good sea legs, let himself sway a little, rhythmically. He looked across at his companion with a close knitting of the brows, and when he spoke his voice had a tone that was almost surly.

"What did you say that for?" he demanded. "To anger me? I know what you want with the game and you know 'tis almost as much my business as 'tis yours. When you name payment to *me*, old man, you speak from the teeth out."

Hunter laughed. It was a curious convulsion, commencing, apparently, in the pit of his stomach and rumbling its way up to his throat: his blue eyes twinkled and his big frame shook with the exertion. The other man, seeing nothing to laugh at, stood impassive, his lower lip slightly protruded.

"It comes through being sired by a Frenchman, I reckon—Dr. Irène's fondness for frogs," Hunter observed, when he had fully enjoyed his chuckle. "He can stow away more of the ugly devils inside him than any man ever I saw. Three times a day, cut and come again, he'll eat 'em! I never knew the beat of it! The idea

crossed me just now that if leg *impulse* could be taken in with leg meat the doctor might store enough motive power in a month to keep him hopping for a century."

The suggestion struck from Bartram's eyes an answering gleam of amusement.

"I ought to have done better," he admitted. "My hand's out and I shot wild at first. I haven't handled a gun for more than a year now. The swamp is full of game."

"This will be plenty for now," Hunter responded, regarding the heaped-up basket with approval. "I'll get you to provide another lot for me later on. I ain't the shot I used to be myself; and I never was much good at frogging. That's why I turned the job over to you. We're both glad of a chance to pleasure Irène, I reckon."

A faint, yet perceptible, change passed over the faces of both men as though a sensitive place throbbed, even under slight pressure. They looked away from each other and out across the marsh.

The sun was setting; the light rays fell, long and obliquely, across marsh weeds and lily pads giving to their lush green a yellowish cast, like green satin seen through a topaz. The air was

motionless, and upward, toward the zenith, pale, and so transparent that sight could pierce the infinite and discern the stars which darkness would disclose more fully. Away up the marsh where it merged into the great swamp, of which it formed a sort of suburb, twilight seemed much nearer; the timber stood thick and knee-deep in water, and the tangles of juniper, reeds, and green brier held themselves still and cast no shadow. Out in the open the saw grass and sedges nodded and swayed, vibrating to the impulse of the tide, and, in places parted widely, showing long sluices of unobstructed water, which moved sluggishly, like half-comatose reptiles.

When Bartram broke the silence his voice was rough and turbulent, as though emotion broke the flow of speech.

"Doesn't Irène give any hope *yet*?"

The elder man shook his head.

"There isn't any to give," he returned hopelessly. "I was over there this morning. She's content enough. She never asks any questions, the nurse says, nor frets after us, nor looks like she missed anything. She appears satisfied to be where she is, and likes her nurse and all that. Irène is vigilant with her, kind and attentive. He's doing all he knows. This morning she

knew me when I went in ; but she didn't seem glad I had come, nor did she show sorrow when I left."

His tone shook a little ; but the sunburned face was impassive. Hunter was a self-controlled man.

"How does she look?"

Bartram kept his eyes averted as he put the question.

"Uncommonly well. As pretty as she used to look long ago, before trouble and hard work pulled her down. She's laying on flesh—it's a bad sign, they say—but it's becoming to her. Her eyes have changed, too ; they are coming to the look of a doe's eyes—soft, but dumb and unresponsive. That much is better."

"I'm going over there," Bartram announced. Then caught by the other's look, added half-restively, "Won't it be any use?"

"None to her. And for you most bitter pain. Better leave it, Trigg."

"*You go!*"

"That's different. I'm her husband, and I'd rather stand the pain than *not* see her. 'Twouldn't do any good your going, and might do harm. The doctor fears excitement more than anything, and a fresh face is always an experiment. I

know it's what you came home for, lad, and you mustn't think hard of me for holding you back. I'd rather you wouldn't go. You never saw her at the worst, and *this* would seem like the worst to you. She doesn't know you've come back. And, maybe, she might not remember."

Bartram looked up quickly, a question on his lips; but the expression on his brother-in-law's face held it unasked. He could see that Hunter was trying to spare him, and that to press the matter would be brutal to them both. Words thronged in his brain—hot, impulsive words; a passionate arraignment of life, of fate, and circumstance which had brought about this issue—of God who had not arbitrarily interfered to avert calamity. His heart waxed fierce and rebellious; the blood in his veins surged, and his eyes brooded under their heavy brows.

"It's the fault of our damned poverty," he growled.

Hunter winced, as from a blow.

"I tried to spare her! God knows I tried! She kept things hid from me, and never let on how hard she worked. When the worst came, Anna told me things I ought to have known before. Do you think I ain't brooding over it all the time? That I'm not likely to go mad myself

thinking how it might have been prevented—if it could have been prevented. Don't you suppose I'd give my soul's salvation—here as I stand, and be glad of the chance—to have her like she used to be? ”

His tone was one of passionate protest, as against accusation.

A pause, and then, still seeking self-justification, he continued: “I ought to have watched, perhaps; but there wasn't anything to lead my notice, and she kept back how she tried to make money outside, sewing for the niggers and writing for newspapers, and all the worry and disappointment of it. It wasn't the *work* that did the mischief. I asked Irène about it. He said that exertion—even continued and strenuous exertion—rarely operated disastrously when mind and body were in a normal condition. Over exertion is as frequently an effect as a cause. With Mabel it was the whole miserable combination; but the thing which precipitated the climax was anxiety and distress about little Ned, and her straining herself by lifting and carrying him. That brought on the premature confinement, and killed the baby. There was another cause, too——”

His speech suddenly halted, and he glanced

aside at his brother-in-law. Something in his expression made the pause significant.

The young fellow leaned on his elbow, with his moody, mutinous gaze following the slow sweep of the stream. He did not appear to heed either the protest or its abrupt termination. His thoughts were busy along lines of their own making—fretting and chafing in impotent rebellion against the inevitable, even as his boat fretted against the pier, held in the grip of a tide too strong for it.

"I'm not blaming *you*," he broke out at last. "Nor I don't mean to cast reflections. You've done the best you could. You've been crippled ever since the war, your hands tied behind your back, as it were. The people of the South have been like creatures maimed and turned loose in a big woods to scuffle for a living, or die. They didn't know how to work, and it takes time to learn, and while they've been getting the lesson things have gone worse and worse with them, and they've gotten poorer and poorer. Can't you see that? It's this infernal poverty! If we had been able to live decently, would Mabel have worked her body down, and weakened it so she couldn't stand anxiety, or throw off disease? If we'd had money to hire a nurse for Ned, would

he have got the chance to fall out of that tree and injure his spine? If you could afford to stay at home and look after your family, instead of grinding out your life teaching, wouldn't they and the farm be better for it? I tell you, want of money is at the bottom of it! And want of money is the curse of curses. It withers, blights, dwarfs, and destroys from the beginning clear through to the end of life."

The elder man's face grew more serious as he listened. His experience was larger than that of his companion, and so was his nature. He was capable of insight into the arcana of things.

"It's tough," he admitted, "this tussle for a place. But money doesn't reach clear through things. The fight isn't all material. Life's too complex for one factor to dominate all factors. Some get a bigger pull, by human conduct not holding to a true orbit; but *all* count. Equilibrium is destroyed when they don't. There are calamities money can't hinder, and hurts it can't help. All the money one could hire wouldn't have kept my boy out of that tree without super-human vigilance. He had made up his mind to climb it. He knew it was dangerous, and had been made a punishable offense, but he was willing to risk danger and punishment to satisfy his

curiosity about that hanger's nest. And all the gold in the Rockies wouldn't have prevented his mother from lifting and carrying him. She wanted to do it. She knew that there was reason for her exercising extra care, but she shut her eyes to the danger of over-exertion. And so it is all along the line. Things don't start from the outside. It isn't possible."

The younger, more impatient man, flung away from this view of the subject. To him material success, and material possessions represented the good of life ; as yet he could see no other. Surface causes, operating in the adjustment of life, were the only causes apparent to him, and, as an outside factor, there is no power like that of money. This his nature recognized, and the importance of money was exaggerated, the necessity for its attainment made paramount. Hunter's deeper philosophy fell on heedless ears. The desire for a point of view, conscious or latent, must ante-date its reception, and Bartram did not want to look at life through anybody's eyes but his own.

Not feeling in the mood for argument, he let the subject go, dropped down to the rowing bench and unshipped his oars, using one to push his boat away from the pier and working the other,

with strong, pliant turn of wrist, to head the little vessel up-stream.

"I hope Dr. Irène will get as much satisfaction out of eating that game as I did out of shooting it," he observed. "Tell him so, with my compliments, will you, Robin? And tell him that I'll keep him supplied, with pleasure, while I'm at home."

Hunter nodded, and rose from his seat. Standing, he did not justify the impression of height given by his figure in a sitting posture. He got up too short. The torso bespoke a man of unusual stature, while actual measurement revealed him below medium height. The effect gave almost a sense of disproportion. As he moved, an explanation was suggested, for he walked as though his legs were made of wood, and the space between knee and ankle appeared preternaturally short. At Shiloh he had been badly damaged in both legs, and the repairs had cost him several inches in height.

"Which way now, Trigg?" he questioned, reverting to the point which had opened their discourse.

Bartram jerked his head backward, a movement which might indicate an intention to penetrate the swamp, but, at the same time, was

susceptible of broader meaning, since his face was toward the seaboard, and behind him lay the expanse of a continent.

"Night will stop you somewhere, I reckon," smiled Hunter. "Shall I tell Anna to save supper for you?"

"No; don't let her trouble about it. I won't be home before morning;" then, reading surprise in the other's look, he half-reluctantly added, "I've a business engagement with a fellow over at Colonel Sturgeon's. I'll stay over there to-night."

"You'd better pull along pretty peart then," Hunter returned. "Sturgeon's place is a good stretch around the bend and night isn't far off. The swamp isn't healthy in a thunderstorm and there'll be a cracker before moonrise, or I'm mistaken in the signs."

He indicated a bank of clouds boiling up along the horizon, black and heavy, like smoke from an engine when the furnace is crammed with pine.

Bartram glanced aloft.

"I can make it," he responded carelessly. "The storm is a good way off. If it should overtake me I'll shelter on Manitou Island till it passes. Good-night, old fellow."

"Good-night, and good luck to you," Hunter

returned, stooping for a stout staff which lay beside the cordwood.

Bartram settled to his work, pulling with long strokes which sent the boat forward in steady sweeps. The tide was in his favor.

## CHAPTER II.


### MANITOU SWAMP.

THE swamp extended inland many miles in a somber sweep of morass and lagoon, heavily wooded with cypress, live-oak and magnolia. The trees stood close, almost jostling one another, and were festooned with moss and other parasitic growth. The great cypress knees started up out of the water, weird and fantastic, suggesting the contorted joints of mammoth skeletons, to which clung coils and tangles of green brier and swamp grapevine, like the cordage of nerve and sinew. The omnipresent water was dark with the stain of decayed vegetation, and sluggish with the inertia of a dead level. The dank earth fostered miasma and cold-blooded, slimy reptiles, which crept, wriggled, and writhed through the jungle, like Dante's fancies through an imaginary Inferno. Resting as they had fallen, hap-hazard, on land, or in water, lay the great trunks of trees, vanquished in the struggle for existence, slowly resolving into the elements from whence they

sprung, and over them vines clambered, drawing life from death, and sprung upward from the graves of the dead trees into the arms of the living ones.

On the edges of the swamp, where it opened into marsh and gradually progressed to firm ground beyond, as a festering wound through circles of irritation touches sound flesh, the timber was more diversified. Bay trees, haw, water-poplar, and juniper mingled with the more somber growth and graded it out to the cane-brakes, the marsh tangles, lily pads and saw grass of the open fens. Taken altogether, it was a dismal region, even in fair weather, but doubly dismal in the gathering twilight with the atmosphere oppressed by the coming of a storm.

Bartram rowed steadily, glancing seldom to the right or left. The stream along which he sent his boat was a tortuous canal kept open for the convenience of the shingle cutters who, during the season, had camps on the hummocks of the mainland and the islands of the lagoons. There was small need for observation. Bartram was used to the swamp; had penetrated it at all hours and in all seasons. Its changes, mysterious and gloomy, were as familiar to him as were those of the fields surrounding the home wherein he had



grown from infancy to manhood. He did not even glance skyward; he could gauge the approach of night by the darkening of the water, and the progress of the storm clouds by the way the trees held themselves, motionless, with the long gray moss hanging from their branches still and straight, like the beards of wizards in council, awaiting an eldrich signal.

Once he paused, resting on his oars, and half-turned to get a fuller view of the lagoon on which he had entered. The light was strange—a sort of dun twilight; the sun had set, leaving behind him tawny streamers of light which lay between slowly converging banks of black cloud like dull flames amid dense smoke. The swamp was still, with the stillness of expectation, or of dread; not a twig moved, not a leaf shook. The wild creatures had withdrawn themselves, sheltering in the cane-brakes and juniper tangles; the frogs, voiceless as mutes, had gone down amid the rushes, and even the rattlesnakes and water moccasins had forsaken the tussocks where they usually coiled and secreted themselves in hollow logs or holes in the earth. For any evidence of animate life perceptible to Bartram's sight or hearing the place might have been as was the land before the Lord God took of the soil and

formed unto man beasts of the field and fowls of the air.

The lagoon broadened into a tarn, shallow at its outer edges, but toward the center deep, with water stained a chocolate brown and—beyond the active influence of tides—a flow so sluggish as to be well-nigh imperceptible. Among the denizens of the country round about it was believed that the bottom of the lake must be a quicksand, for the fact was known that aught sinking into the waters thereof, no matter what its nature, returned no more into the light of day. A short distance beyond the center of the lake, toward its inland end, was an island a couple of acres in extent and covered, in part, with undergrowth. It was relatively dry, being lifted well above the surface of the water, and on it the men engaged in the shingle trade had for many years had one of their principle camps. The island lay in the track of navigation out of the swamp and was a good place for storing shingles for shipment, so the swampers had erected thereon a cabin of cypress logs and supplemented it with a couple of sheds.

There had been a legend among the coast Indians—handed down from a period to which the memory of man returneth not with certainty—

which declared the island the actual earthly habitation of the Great Spirit. There, they believed, he would appear, at intervals, to the "medicine man" of a favored tribe dwelling on the borders of the swamp, in the semblance of a gigantic rattlesnake, which was the "totum" of the tribe. They called the place "Manitou," and erected there a medicine lodge, which was held in sanctity and might only be approached by warriors eminent for wisdom in council and courage in conflict. No woman durst come near the place in any guise whatever, so long as the breath of life should be in her nostrils; but, when death should have purified her womanhood, her body might rest within sight of the sacred lodge, and her soul—should she possess such a thing—might hover about it without let or hindrance.

When the remnants of the coast tribes, overpowered and crowded out by the whites, finally set their faces northward to unite with the Five Nations, the island lodge, no longer held in veneration, fell into ruin and decay until at length no vestige of it remained. But the legend lived, and the name of the island clung to it, seeming tacitly to stand in evidence of the truth that if there be a "Great Spirit" the waste and desolate

places of the earth are as fittingly his habitation as those physically more favored.

Bartram's glance around, apparently, satisfied him as to the course most expedient, for he headed his boat straight for Manitou Island and laid to his oars with a will. The elements were arraying themselves for conflict with an impetuosity which defied calculation and the plantation to which he was bound was fully three miles further around the bend of the swamp.

A long shuddering sigh swept through the swamp and across the lake, falling and dying along the bosom of the water. Bartram ran his boat into a tiny cove and fastened it to a cypress stump. The cabin was about ten yards away, and he caught up his gun and hastened to it.

It was early in the season and most of the shingle men were working in the larger swamps along the coast. The island was deserted, but the cabin contained nothing of value, so had need of neither lock nor bar. Bartram lifted the latch and entered. The outside atmosphere was heavy and dense; but little light penetrated through the open doorway; the windowless room seemed as uninviting as the interior of a hollow log. Bartram knew that somewhere in the opposite wall there was a hole for light and ventilation

protected by a batten shutter. He advanced, gropingly, to find and unfasten it. His feet moved among shavings, chips, and bits of shingle; half-way across the room his hand came in contact with a pile of shingles, packed close, and filling, as far as he could judge, the entire side of the cabin—the surplus of the preceding season, doubtless, stored here for protection from the weather.

Bartram fumbled in his pocket for matches. The gloom of the interior would be lightened by a blaze on the hearth, and of fuel there was plenty to his hand. The small metal match-box yielded only a broken one, minus its business end, and the most industrious search failed to elicit satisfactory returns from the pockets, so Bartram gave up all thought of a fire and kicked about in the dark until he found a rough bench, which he moved into the light of the doorway. The storm, in all probability, would be over before moonrise. His gun he had placed just inside the door. The delay tormented him and, but for arriving at Colonel Sturgeon's in disheveled and storm-beaten plight, he would have kept on, being too robust a swamper to regard a drenching as a serious matter. But a bedraggled man is not a respect-inspiring object, and at Colonel

Sturgeon's there would be a gentleman to meet on whom Bartram flattered himself he had made a favorable impression, which he wished not only to hold but deepen. Within the near future lay the probability that the acquaintance might be of service. Already, to Bartram, this man appeared to hold the keys of fortune at his girdle.

And that the portal to the enchanted land of wealth should swing wide for him the young fellow was determined. He longed for the power and influence which wealth can bestow, for the material comfort and enjoyment which it can command. He thirsted for it—heart, soul, and body—as prisoners in a dark place thirst for air and sunlight. His life had been a monotonous struggle with adverse conditions, and the vigor of his nature made him hot and mutinous. His emotional endowment was limited ; its capacity for enlargement doubtful ; but there was within him a dogged tenacity of purpose and a certain recognition of responsibility and faithfulness to it, within bounds, likely to generate forces powerful enough to send his life along strangely intersecting lines.

The storm drew close, infolding the swamp. It grew dark, with the blackness of moonless night. Above, the sky, thick and dusk as the

hide of a leviathan, rounded itself, and whips of flame lashed it, followed by thunder that was like a colossal roar of agony. The wind had risen; for miles the sound of its coastward advance could be heard, like the rush of breakers when they lift themselves and throw forward a whole length upon rocks. The air vibrated as the wind struck the swamp, and the trees, stripped naked of moss and leaves, writhed and doubled themselves down, dodging, as it were, and seeking to elude a power with which they were impotent to cope.

The lightning played hither and thither—jagged and terrible. Bartram's eyes followed it, his thought divorced, for the moment, from his own concerns by a spectacle grand enough to dwarf personality. As he looked, a bolt leaped from the sky, as an arrow leaps from the bow-string, and struck the crest of a great magnolia with a dart of fire which slipped downward, splitting and rending bark and fiber, and buried itself in the earth not ten steps from the wall of the cabin.

Bartram sprang to his feet and swerved—as though the next bolt might be for him, moving hastily aside out of the draught of the doorway and oblivious of the theory that lightning never

strikes twice in the same place. The bench on which he had been seated, a tottering affair at best, fell over with the impetus of his movement making a rustle and stir among the shavings. And straightway there arose a strident noise, like the whirl of a watchman's rattle suddenly sprung, followed by a sharp hiss and the rush of a body through the air close to his leg. Bartram paused and shrank together, fearing to move lest his venomous fellow-refugee should strike again and with more accuracy of aim.

Then the lightning came once more in a great sheet which lit up the heavens like a conflagration and penetrated the room, causing that portion of it in which Bartram stood to start out from the darkness, for the fraction of a second, with photographic distinctness. The shingles, loosely packed, sloped from the fireplace end of the room, where the pile was highest, until in the end, near the door, it was simply a ragged heap, thrown down pell-mell, and scarcely knee high. Bartram's glance, seeking the whereabouts of the rattlesnake, fell on the shingle heap, distinct in the electric glare, and on something huddled down in the angle of the wall at sight of which he drew back and caught up his gun with a swift curdling of the blood. He waited for the

lightning to come again with a sweat of horror upon him, and a vision impressed upon his retina of contorted limbs and a stark white face, strangely dark above, as though the head abruptly ended at the eyebrows. He bent forward, peering close, and when the ghastly revelation was repeated, tore himself away from it with blanched lips and went out into the night and the storm, sick and faint, with the feeling that Nature, even in tempest, was preferable to some phases of the handiwork of man.

And the darkness folded around him, as it were a garment; the rain began to fall, and the thunder, rumbling away in the distance, filled the air with vibrations like unto the laughter of giants, bent on rapine and shaken mightily with glee.

## CHAPTER III.

### DRAKE REENY—OR THE DEVIL!

GROPING and stumbling, Bartram made his way to the shed in the rear of the cabin. It was a rude enough structure, simply forked poles driven into the ground, with transverse poles laid on them, and a covering of slabs. It would, however, serve as a shelter from the rain; nothing could be worse than the cabin, now that he was conscious of the thing which the darkness, at first, had covered. The shed was boarded up at the back, but open at front and sides; there were no shingles here, nor shavings on the ground. The lightning showed it to him in all its nakedness, and showed him also that it was already occupied. A man sat on a cypress log, about the middle of the shed, with his knees drawn up to his chin, and his arms clasped around them. Bartram halted, and his grasp tightened on the gun in his hand.

“Who’s there?”

His tone was imperative, but his voice had a foreign sound in his own ears.

From out of the darkness came a chuckling laugh; other response there was none.

This sort of reply would have been disconcerting at all times, but, under existing circumstances, Bartram felt it to be horrible. It jarred on his nerves so that his temper rose; a chill had fallen on him, followed by a heat. The island, that night, appeared given over to the possession of devils. He raised his gun, and spoke again:

"Quit that—whoever you are!—and answer right, or I'll put a bullet through you! Now, then, who is it?"

"'Tain't none o' *your* business, durn ye!" came the retort. "I ain't got nothin' o' your'n. You better lemme 'lone! I tell ye."

The tone was half savage, half lachrymose, and the effect of it coming, so to speak, from space, unconnected with visible bodily presence, would have been disagreeable to most people. With Bartram the effect was different; the tension relaxed, and he instantly lowered his gun. The voice was familiar. He came under the shed at once.

The backbone of the storm was broken; the deadlier of the elemental forces had spent themselves for the time, and the clouds attested con-

tinued activity only in a copious downpour of rain. Bartram put out his hand and groped about until it came in contact with a human shoulder. Coat there was none, and the shirt felt coarse and ragged ; his fingers rested on naked flesh.

“ Its Drake Reeny—or the devil ! ”

Bartram's tone was assertive, and the shoulder under his hand moved slightly, with an acquiescent jerk.

The man—for in development he was an adult, although in years still a boy—was the son of a swamper who occupied a cabin near the outskirts of the marsh. Bartram had hunted with the father, a worthless debauchee, many times, and had known the son from childhood. From his birth, Drake had been accounted dull and heavy-witted, and a continual course of brutal treatment at the hands of parents well-nigh dehumanized by their manner of living, had retarded mental development to such an extent that, to impatient people, he seemed little short of an idiot. He was held to be harmless, unless pushed to an extreme, when the excitability which had come to him through a strain of Gallic blood would manifest itself in ways that were dangerous. He frequented the shingle camps, and fetched and carried for the men, who liked him after a fash-

ion, but all freely admitted that, should he be pushed beyond his limit, Drake Reeny had it in him to become "a durned mean an' awk'ard cuss to handle."

Bartram, in his then mood, would have cheerfully welcomed the companionship of a Barbary ape, so that of Drake Reeny—idiot though he was held to be—for the nonce appeared a veritable godsend. He moved around and seated himself on the log beside the boy, and spoke to him amiably. The sound of his own voice, addressing a sentient creature from whom there was possibility of response, was a comfort to him. It renewed his self-confidence, and helped him to shake off the oppression of the night; contact with *living* humanity reërected the bulwarks which horror had annihilated; his nature reasserted itself, alert and practical. He speedily put himself in possession of the fact that Drake had been on the island for several hours, and also that the boy had seen him—Bartram—land and enter the cabin. When questioned as to his reasons for not calling out, or in some way demonstrating his presence, the answer was a sulky "dunno."

A subtle change in the boy's tone, an accession of slyness, an instinctive reservation, fixed Bar-

tram's attention and aroused his curiosity. How much did Drake know? For how much was he responsible? Bartram bent nearer his companion, striving to penetrate the darkness and obtain premises from which to draw conclusions. The impulse rose to seize the creature beside him, to make accusations, to demand explanations; but prudence held it in check. The boy was as tall and to the full as muscular as he was himself; they were alone together, shut out from aid, or interference; in a life and death struggle it would be man to man, with the chances in Drake's favor, since he was suspected of carrying a concealed knife. True, he might club his gun and stun the boy, or even shoot him; but what right had he to resort to violence on suspicion? Better to wait for daylight and certainty. Bartram inwardly cursed at the darkness, and at his own folly in neglecting to supply himself with matches.

For a time there was silence, and then Drake, with the remark that he was "plumb tuckered out," slipped from the log and stretched himself on the ground behind it. His feet were toward Bartram and with one of them he softly patted against the log while he made with his mouth a humming noise, not unlike the sound of a spin-

ning-wheel, turned continuously. Bartram remembered tales he had heard of the boy's possessing the gift of "charming" beasts and reptiles and enticing them to him with his calls. And so little, in some of his moods, did the poor creature appear removed from a brute condition himself that the stories had gained credence even among those unfamiliar with exhibitions of his skill. With the knowledge of the immediate neighborhood of all sorts of things that creep and crawl the idea of having them invited to draw up and be sociable was unpleasant. Bartram kicked out at random, with the order to "quit that infernal racket" delivered in such a hectoring tone that the boy relapsed into silence.

It rained still, but more slowly. Bartram rose, and leaned against one of the posts that supported the shed. The clouds were lighter and, in places, had drifted apart, showing patches of pale distance clear with starlight. As nearly as Bartram could guess the moon must have been up an hour, and when the clouds should pass there would be light enough to find his way out of the swamp. He waited, pondering the situation and making up his mind what it would be best for him to do. His own affairs drew aside before a more pressing emergency ; but, insensi-

bly, they influenced his decision. For the investigation which would follow on the information he must lay a coroner, or magistrate, would be necessary or complications might arise. He would go on at once to Colonel Sturgeon's and place the matter in his hands.

The coroner lived in the village, which was nearer, but the colonel being a magistrate would do as well. To Bartram the course he preferred taking appeared the best.

The clouds parted more and more. The rain ceased; but moisture continued to drip, drip from the trees and bushes, and from the eaves of the shed. The moonlight penetrated the shed and fell obliquely across the idiot's face, illuminating half and leaving half in shadow. His slumber was to all appearance profound and conscienceless, and as the untroubled sound of his breathing came to Bartram's ear the darkest of his suspicions subsided. He turned and bent downward, seeking to read the unconscious countenance at his feet. The moonlight was tender and elusive; it would not lend itself to detective's work; he could make nothing of the attempt, and so abandoned it and went out into the night.

On his way to the boat-landing, he passed in front of the cabin, and involuntarily glanced to-

ward it, vaguely expectant of some visible change. There was none. He smiled at his own unreasonableness and advanced to the door. It was open, as he had left it, and he leaned forward, his hands on the doorposts, his eyes intent and eager, peering into the semi-darkness of the interior. After a second so spent, he stepped over the threshold, advanced to the corner and bent over the object of his former terror, still half-concealed while half-revealed by the moonlight, and examined it carefully. When he had satisfied himself, he came out again and pulled the door together, slipping the hasp over the staple and securing it with a bit of shingle.

Then he went to his boat, pushed off and rowed rapidly along the lake.

The clouds scudded northward; the moon hung high in pale ether; there was a shining pathway along the water, but farther on the swamp growth cast deep shadows. Bartram guided his boat into a channel branching out from the lake. The moonlight here was obstructed; for the trees stood close, but Bartram knew his way and rowed with precision.

When he had rowed about a mile he paused, and, for a moment, rested on his oars with the aspect of a man whose mind is pulled two ways.

Then, with an impatient oath at his own stupidity, he turned the boat and doubled on his track.

He had not scrupled to leave Drake Reeny on the island, knowing that it would be easy to find him should he be required ; but he had overlooked the possibility that the boy might have sense enough to discover himself to be in an equivocal position and cunning enough to complicate matters, with a view to his own protection. The workings of an abnormal brain defy all calculation. He must return and secure the door of the cabin, or else bring Drake away with him. There was a padlock attached to the chain of his boat and the key was in his pocket. Bartram could scarcely account for the obtuseness which had prevented him from thinking of it sooner.

As he once more neared the island, Bartram half turned to glance over his shoulder. The place looked silent and deserted, as when he had left it ; no movement, nor sign of movement. His glance wandered over the surface of the water ; the silver pathway made by the moonlight was cross-cut by shining ripples, like those left in the wake of a boat, and just in front of him, not two hundred yards away, floated a dark object which he easily made out to be a canoe. A man

stood in it with his back turned. He was half bent over and, as Bartram looked, he slowly raised himself with a heavy burden in his arms, which he heaved up with all his strength, and cast outward. It fell with a deep plunge into the water alongside, and the canoe danced like a cork on the undulations caused by the disturbance: bubbles rose and lay in a frothy island the size of a man's hand, and a great white heron, his rest broken by the vibrations, rose from somewhere in the shadow of the island, and flitted spectrally across the lagoon.

Bartram, with a swift intuition of that which had happened, dashed in his oars and sent his own boat hissing through the water, shouting an imperious order and trusting to the habit of subordination which he knew to be strong in the idiot to produce involuntary obedience. His pulses throbbed with excitement and his strokes fell swift and regular, like those of an athlete who pulls a race. His boat shot forward—one length—two lengths—and he was beside the canoe. It was empty, courtesying and bobbing on the ripples, like a *danseuse*. Bartram bent over the side of his boat and listened along the water. In an instant he caught the vibrations of a swimmer—the idiot had slipped into the

water like an otter and was making for the swamp.

Bartram caught up his gun and fired, once, twice, in the direction from whence had come signs of the swimmer. The sound of the reports struck against the wall of jungle round about and fell back, weird, and with a strange difference; the bullets skipped harmlessly along the water and there was a whirr of wings as a flock of wild ducks, disturbed by the noise, blundered up and flew, gropingly, for a hundred yards or so, and then settled again.

The canoe was drifting. Bartram drew it close to the side of his boat and examined it from stem to stern. There was in it no scrap of evidence save a small dark object lying near a cross-rib. Bartram reached over and took it in his hand.

## CHAPTER IV.

### MANNINGHAM.

“TWA lang Scotts miles, and a bittock,” from the borders of the swamp was the village of Morley, called after the town of that name in the West Riding of Yorkshire from the vicinity of which most of the settlers here-away had come. The American representative of the English town was a place of several hundred inhabitants, too small to be incorporated, but immensely consequential and opinionated. Its principal industries were two lumber yards, a depot for swamp cypress shingles, and a large male academy, successfully conducted by one Lyle Peterkin, a University of Virginia man with a kite-tail of distinguishing initials tacked to his name as long as a man’s arm. Morley was also the seat of county government, and had an extensive environment of out-lying plantations, all with mouth-filling West Riding names, as befitted a people with conservative traditions. The outcome of the Civil War had reduced most of them to a hope-

lessly disabled condition and they lay mere hulks of former grandeur stranded on reefs of present indigence.

Midway between the swamp and the village lay Manningham, the plantation of Robin Hunter, Esq. In the good old days when life moved leisurely, and men had means for cultivation, and labor at command, Manningham had been a show place, boasting the best filled graneries, the most fertile fields, the best cared for negroes and stock, and the heaviest crops in the section.

The Hunters had been a proud race always—proud of their ancestry, which they tracked back to some specially significant leader among the brave Brigantes of Yorkshire, who had defied Ostorius Scapula to his teeth, and set at naught the power of Claudius and his legions. Proud also of themselves, as honorable men and high-hearted women, who revered God and humanity and kept a sharp lookout to windward to circumvent the devil. They likewise held their estate of Manningham in high esteem as being the outward and visible form of certain spiritual entities of value, and were wont, upon occasion, when the company was congenial, to take from its place in a specially consecrated pigeon hole of the old oak secretary with brass bosses, which

stood in the library, a yellow parchment, fairly engrossed, and bearing the royal seals and signatures, which conferred this same estate of Manningham upon "one Edmonde Hunter, Gentleman, and his posteritie." And the Hunter exhibiting this parchment would generally affirm, as a sort of addenda, that as a Hunter should receive the plantation from his sire so he must transmit it to his son, for the honor of the old name, and in obedience to English precedent.

All this, with many other ethical values at the South, belong to *ante-bellum* days rather than to these. Robin Hunter, the present incumbent of Manningham, could take small pleasure in gazing abroad over his ancestral acres. The scars of war were upon the place, as well as the gentler ravages of time. Heaps of charred ruins showed where had formerly stood barns, gin-houses, negro quarters, and plantation offices of various sorts; and fields and woods, erstwhile inclosed, were now a fenceless common, fast growing up in scrub and underbrush for lack of means to cope with the ceaselessly springing vegetation of the South. Even the fields still under cultivation showed galled and gullied places, and stretches where the crops grew thin for lack of the renewal which the soil gets from thorough

and purposeful plowing. Altogether the plantation had gradually taken on the out-at-elbows, down-at-heel aspect which marks one of the ugliest phases of a return to original conditions.

Any tide of returning prosperity which, as the country settled again after its upheaval and life readjusted itself, might have set in toward Manningham, was effectually dammed back by a heavy mortgage which Hunter had been compelled to put on the place just at the close of the war. During the time in which he had remained still helpless from his wounds, at the house of his father-in-law, that gentleman, a Southerner of the old school, upright in intention and culpably careless in method, had obtained his signature to a note for a considerable amount, for which, in the course of time and human events, Hunter had found himself responsible. The loss of his negroes, the burning of a quantity of cotton which he had in store, and the general devastation incident to hostile occupation had so crippled Hunter's resources that, when the note had reached maturity, he had found himself literally reduced to the ground for basis on which to raise funds wherewith to meet it. A mortgage had therefore been put on Manningham which had held Hunter in bondage

for nearly sixteen years and promised to continue so to hold him for the term of his natural life, should nothing unprecedented occur to win release for him. The interest on it yearly ate up the diminished proceeds of the place and left the family livelihood to be scuffled for in outside ways.

Hunter did not blame anyone, not even himself, and when his thoughts went back to the old time it was without bitterness. Custom authorizes certain business methods—in themselves rather iniquitous—and the general habit of mind in regard to them is not critical. It never occurred to Hunter that his father-in-law, knowing his affairs to be involved, should have refrained from asking him to go his security, or that he himself, being asked, should have had the courage to refuse. Had William Bartram lived, Hunter felt assured, he would have contrived to meet his note, at maturity, himself. But, since Providence, and the fortunes of war, had decreed that that gallant gentleman should pass into the infinite, at the point of a Federal bayonet, fully five months before there had been any need to think about the note at all, what would you? On discovering the deceased soldier's assets to be *nil*, Hunter had squared his shoulders to the burdens which seemed naturally to settle upon them, without any

hard feelings or backward glances. It was in the man's nature to subordinate material things and to regard them abstractly, as factors in development rather than as ultimates.

It was not of his financial difficulties, struggles, and failures that he thought as he trudged along, helping himself with his staff and occasionally transferring his basket of game from one arm to the other. About a quarter of a mile from the swamp the road forked, one branch leading directly to Manningham, while the other circled round a bit, took in one or two other plantations and so on, circuitously, to Morley. Hunter paused at the junction and consulted his watch, an ancestral looking timepiece with a fob chain and heavy seal, engraved with a coat of arms. It had stopped at a quarter of 5. A. M. of a June morning of the previous year, a fact of which Hunter, of course, was fully aware, but which he unconsciously ignored whenever the idea of time suggested itself. He smiled over his own forgetfulness and turned the watch affectionately in his hand ere restoring it to his pocket. It had been in his family for many generations and he had a fancy that it should last through his time. When Trigg should return to the city he would send the old watch and see what a first-class

jeweler could do for its renewal. And, after a bit, when circumstances should permit, he would have new works put in for Ned; the little lad already showed appreciation of family traditions and belongings.

In the meanwhile, what could be the hour? He faced about and steadfastly regarded the westering sun, lifting his hand and inclining it, with the fingers slightly apart, after a method of taking solar observations common to woodcraft. Then he glanced around and aloft, noting the storm clouds and roughly estimating their progress.

Satisfied, apparently, he turned from the homeward track and proceeded toward the village as briskly as his defective locomotion would permit.

The atmosphere was still, offering no resistance to the passage of sound, and odorous with the perfume of Chinese honeysuckle which, passing the boundaries of the old-fashioned gardens, had usurped the land, filling every hedgerow with its white and buff blossoms and uplifting entralling tendrils even to the tree tops. The road, worn lower than the surface of neighboring fields, wound along between plantation fences, much overgrown, after the untidy but picturesque fashion of the South. Occasionally a magnolia

or live-oak, left standing in a fence corner, threw an oblique shadow across the road, but in no way obstructed such view as the flatness of the country afforded.

Hunter's eyes showed an appreciative recognition of the restfulness of natural beauty; some of the lines in his face straightened out, and he drew the perfumed air into his lungs with relish keen enough to generate an emotion of thankfulness. After all it was a good world, and life was good, even with the overshadowing of storm clouds. They would pass — everything must pass, and meanwhile the breath of the honey-suckle was sweet, and he was on his way to make some slight return for kindness received.

As he rounded a bend of the road the regular beat of a horse's trot came to him, supplemented by the light crunching of wheels on a gravelly bit of road ahead. Hunter drew aside and waited, leaning on his staff. He had a very clear notion of who the wayfarer would turn out to be. In a moment, a handsome, cleanly-built black mare trotted into sight, picking up her feet evenly, and holding her head high, so that her eyes' wide intelligence could take in not only the path she had to travel, but surrounding objects as well. The buggy to which she was attached was an or-

dinary top concern, such as is in general use with physicians, very strong and serviceable. In it were seated a gentleman, who held the reins, and a small negro boy. As the buggy pulled up abreast of him, Hunter pushed back his hat and, for perhaps the hundredth time, voiced his admiration :

"Halloo, doctor! Well met! I was just going to your place, but this is better. Every time I see that mare under harness I think better of her. After all, there's nothing like blood for action. Highflyer, I think you said. She looks like it."

"Yes. Highflyer, out of Muriel. You know my notions about transmission. I like a pedigree. Salome comes of good Bluegrass stock, and inherits her powers as well as her beauty."

"Anything else?" laughed Hunter.

"Yes. A nervous temperament, a nasty trick of temper, and many unreasonable prejudices in regard to grooms. Dempsey here," with a quizzical side glance at his companion, "is a trifling monkey enough, but Salome likes him, so we continue our alliance in spite of occasional misunderstandings."

The negro grinned. He had a broad, comical countenance, with fine eyes and nondescript feat-

ures which, somehow, looked as though a ball of tar had been rolled in the hand and places in it roughly pinched up, or flattened, with the fingers. He made no rejoinder, save the display of ivory, and a quick glance from the mare to her owner. Evidently there was sympathy and mutual comprehension between the trio.

Hunter advanced and presented his basket.

"I know you're fond of game," he explained. "And my boy Trigg is at home now, and a first-rate shot. He took to the marsh in your behalf this morning, and will keep your table supplied while he stays. It will be a pleasure to him. He bade me say so with his compliments."

Dr. Irène inspected the game knowingly, weighing the ducks in his hand, and testing the plumpness of the frog legs by judicious pinches, talking the while with the gusto of a gourmand. He was not the man to belittle a gift, or disappoint the giver, by lack of intelligent interest and appreciation. When he had made an end of his observations—even to admiration of the tints and markings in the plumage of the birds—he ordered Dempsey to descend and wend his way homeward with the basket, inviting Hunter, at the same time, to assume the place at his side.

"I'm on my way to a swamper's cabin just beyond your place," he affirmed, "and can set you down just as well as not—better, in fact; it's the nearest way. By cutting across your pasture I can save a mile, and that's a consideration with a storm in the near distance. There will be no objection to that, if I put up the fence again, will there? Eh, I thought not. Now, in with you, and let's be moving."

Hunter scrambled in, with due allowance made for his stiff legs, and settled himself comfortably. Hardly a day passed during which the men failed to meet, but this was the first time he had seen Irène in the open air for several weeks. The doctor's face was pale, and drawn about the cheeks, and flattened at the temples; his eyes had shadows under them; his hands, while holding the reins in capable, workmanlike fashion, showed white and thin at the joints, with a cordage of blue veins plainly visible through the skin; his shoulders stooped a trifle, and altogether, he looked like a man upon whom the hand of illness was grudgefully loosening its hold. Hunter regarded him with disapprobation.

"You're off your oats yet," he observed. "I hate to see it. Ar'n't you picking up your practice too soon? This is the third or fourth time you've been out."

"Oh, no. Open air is the best thing for me. I'm all right, or will be shortly. The effects of blood poisoning wear out slowly. What can you expect when a fellow neglects antiseptics? I knew better—the veriest student would have. 'Twas my own fault."

He shied away from the subject with a remark anent the coming storm. A man grows impatient of continued comment upon conduct which he admits to have been culpably careless. Some weeks previous Dr. Irène had been neglectful of certain precautions in dissection now considered indispensable. The result had been a close shave for his life, and reconstructed views in regard to his own vulnerability.

In the companionable silence which is a supreme evidence of congenial friendship, they bowed along for a short distance, then Irène laughed out with swift zest. He had queer suddenesses and enthusiasms of thought and speech in odd contrast with a controlled and purposeful manner, the result of an admixture of blood in his veins, perhaps. Hunter mentally compared him to electricity, a vital force doing the work of the world in masterly fashion and yet defying human comprehension. He was a cerebral scientist and beginning to be noted in special lines of his profession.

"A message I received half an hour ago amuses me—the wording of it, I mean," he explained. "It was from the Reeny woman, over at that swamp cabin. Her man is a compatriot of my father's—or, perhaps, his father was—they've French blood anyway, so when Reeny gets prostrated by swamp gin, and *delirium tremens* is imminent, they usually send for me. He'll go off, like a snap-shot, some day. He's at the poison end of a venomous spree now. One of those malarious little boys came to my place just now to report that 'Dad—dog-gone him!—was a-howlin' an' a-t'arin' like er crazy critter wid drink—a-cussin' of 'em all, single, an' *bunched*.' He was, moreover, 'fistin' of 'em all an' knockin' thar haid together.' Mrs. Reeny wanted me to come over as speedily as possible and 'lay his speret.' "

"Poor soul!" commiserated Hunter, "she must have the deuce of a time with Reeny. One can't wonder that she goes all wrong. It's hard to keep straight in a foul atmosphere."

"If they'd move out of that pestiferous cabin and into the open, somewhere, they'd have a better show," observed the doctor. "At all events the children might. Of all malarious, pestilential holes this side the infernal regions, that hol-

low they live in takes the lead. They're herded like rabbits in a warren, too—and land so plentiful all around! Who does the place belong to?"

"Sturgeon. 'Tisn't his fault that cabin is occupied, however. He thought the negroes had used it up for kindling wood years ago. The Reenys had been in occupation for two years before he found out the house was still standing. That hollow is on the road to nowhere. When he found out about it, the colonel remonstrated with Reeny for putting his family in such a hole, and offered to let him build in the pine woods above his blacksmith's shop. But Reeny wouldn't. He thought it too much trouble to cut timber and throw up another cabin, so he's staid on where he is, and aims to circumvent chills with swamp gin. Reeny is the sort of a fellow who must have the corn shelled, ground, and baked into bread before he'll take it."

"Why didn't the colonel pull the house down, and force 'em to quit?"

Hunter answered after the tolerant Southern fashion.

"He didn't like to. In fact, I don't believe he ever thought of such a thing. The cabin is of no use to him; nor the hollow it stands in either. Why should he evict them—for what reason?"

"Humanity, and sanitary considerations. Does Reeny pay rent?"

"For that hole! Lord love you, no! What do you take Sturgeon for? Reeny's a squatter."

Irène laughed again.

"Don't get indignant. You Southerners are a queer lot. You let a man squat on you in a hovel hardly fit for a pigsty, and forbear to assert manorial rights and force the fellow to better his condition for sentimental reasons. Genuine kindness would have more backbone, wouldn't it? I dare say Reeny could pay for a better place if he wanted to. How about those little whispers of a camp in the swamp hereaway where gin is decocted from juniper berries, with scant regard for revenue?"

Hunter smiled. "It's hard to prove these things, and one can't believe all the tales one hears. The negroes are responsible for most of them. The swamp is a mighty rattlesnaky place, and disheartening to revenue folks. The Reenys are not aborigines. They come from down Florida way. The idiot son was a good big chap when they drifted here."

"Mrs. Reeny's Irish, isn't she?"

"She claims it; and her speech bears her out."

"And Catholic, no doubt," pursued the doctor,

who, for some reason, appeared to take special interest in the "poor white" family under discussion. "Reeny also, perhaps, as far as he's anything. I wonder whether a priest had a hand in that union."

Hunter sucked in his lips and blew them out again. The subject bored him.

"That's as may be," he responded indifferently. "It would take a bold man to put the question to Mrs. Reeny, I fancy. She's said to be gifted in the matter of language when her temper's up."

The buggy had turned in through a gate left conveniently open, and was passing up an avenue of magnolias. The house was in sight, with what looked to be an unbroken sweep of verdure up to it. The yard proper was separated from the larger domain by a ha-ha, crossed in the rear of the house, whither the drive circled, by a bridge. The building itself was rambling, with the wide windows and deep verandas which Southern people love. The roof was decorated with quaint little fluted dormer windows, which looked as though they might have been turned out of old-fashioned cake molds, and where from time to time additions had been made, the walls jutted out in unexpected angles. The oldest part of the house was built of imported brick, molded in

large squares and of two colors, which had been worked along the *façade* into an arabesque design. It was possible to fancy the place, when new, presenting a *bizarre*, almost Byzantine effect, increased by the semitropical verdure about it and the cerulean deepness of the distance which formed its usual background. Time and neglect, however, had mellowed all to a uniform dinginess, and even the newer portions, constructed of a less tenacious native imitation of the foreign material, offered no contrasts. The spring growth of the creepers was still insufficient to cover up defects, so that many a battle scar of time, which later would be tenderly concealed, now faced the world in all its unsightliness.

It was a grand old place, despite its shabbiness, and its too apparent aspect of having seen its best days. A grand old place—quiet and restful—standing yet, for what it had been from its foundation, the cradle of a race.

Hunter regarded it lovingly, noting all its beauty from the swaying moss on the old live oaks, and the burnished darkness of the magnolias, to the tender green of the young shoots, silhouetted against the bricks, and the steel color of the threatening sky beyond. He glanced at his companion with quick desire for sympathy in

his appreciation, and received from the doctor one of those rare smiles, which begin in the eyes, like the dawning of a new day, and so pass downward to the lips.

They had crossed the little bridge and turned aside on the grass, to reach a side entrance much used by the family. The windows were open and the sound of a piano came to them clearly. The wheels made little noise, but, with the first notes, Irène stopped his horse and motioned his companion to silence. It was the prelude of a song and in a moment a woman's voice, a pure, but not powerful, soprano, took it up. The words came to them distinctly:

He took from its nest in my golden hair,  
A knot of ribbon, blue—  
He placed on my hand a jewel rare,  
And whispered low as he held it there,  
Tender and true, adieu, adieu,  
Tender and true, adieu, adieu.

## CHAPTER V.

“IT’S DANGEROUS IN THE SWAMP.”

WHEN the song was finished, even down to the bringing home of the soldier lover, in a flag-en-shrouded coffin, with the “knot of ribbon, blue” all wet with his heart’s blood, Hunter descended and invited his companion to follow his example.

“The storm is pretty close now,” he said. “And you ought not to risk a wetting. It’s going to be a cracker and, may be, won’t last long. Come in till it’s over. Anna will be glad to see you and so will the boy.”

For a second, Irène hesitated ; a vision of the homelike room with its antique adornments and restful charm, and of the woman from whom the charm seemed to emanate, flitted before his spiritual sight and allured him. He had half a mind to accept, and turned his own eyes skyward, seeking to justify his inclinations by atmospheric reasons. The storm was nearing, but not immediately at hand ; he had ample protection, in the way of oilcloths, moreover,

and the message brought him from the swamper's cabin had been urgent. The physician dominated the man and he tightened his reins and touched Salome.

"I can easily make the cabin before the worst comes," he declared. "Thanks all the same, though. I'd like tremendously to stop, but," with a slight shrug of the thin shoulders, "needs must where the devil drives, and those people over yonder must be in something of a pickle. The eldest son had taken to the swamp, under threat of having his head split open with an ax, and the rest of the children were hiding out in the potato holes. It will be worse, too, before it's better. Good-night. Remember me to the *cantatrice* inside."

"She'll be sorry not to see you."

Irène smiled. "Tell her I'll be over shortly to try that new duet," then, as he drove off, he called back: "How long will your brother-in-law be with you? I'd like to call and thank him for the game."

"Not long, I reckon," Hunter responded. "Trigg's always in a hurry. You'd better come soon."

Then he turned toward the house.

The room, from which the music had come,

was an attractive place, with lofty ceiling and wainscoted walls, against which old family portraits, in cracked frames of dingy gilding, showed in fine relief. The furniture was antique and cumbersome, belonging to the period of oak and leather, but there were some more modern chairs of white oak, with curved backs and basket-work seats, made by the Pamunkey Indians. They had been stained dark brown with walnut juice, and were cushioned with patchwork-covered pillows. The mantel was of carved wood, defaced in places by vandal hands, and so tall and narrow that only small ornaments could be placed upon it with safety, and ordinary people were compelled to rise on tip-toe should they desire to view themselves in the mirror which hung above it. This was of less moment now than formerly, for sight of one's self therein must needs be a shock to the nervous system, unless due allowance should be made, and the imagination prepared before hand. The mirror—of fine French plate, imported at considerable expense by the Hunter who had converted Manningham from a wilderness lodge into a civilized mansion—in shape resembled a playbill, very long and narrow, and had furnished a unique field for a rather ingenious piece of mischief. During a certain period of the Civil War,

Manningham had been within the Federal lines, and used as headquarters by many officers. One of these, to beguile the tedium of a season of inaction, had scratched, with the point of a diamond, his entire personal history, with his exploits by field and flood, upon the surface of the mirror. The story was illustrated, making scratches of all sorts and sizes, and the effect upon the human countenance reflected therein was that of elaborate tattooing.

To this youth, also, was due the disfigurement of many of the portraits, with bullet holes in vital places, supplementary mustaches, sketched boldly in with charcoal, and disadvantageous alterations of costume. The pictures, in one way and another, had been restored, but the mirror was marred past mending.

The only article in the room belonging distinctly to the present day was an upright piano, of excellent make, which stood in the recess by the fireplace. It belonged to Dr. Irène, and, some months previous—in fact, before it had become necessary to remove poor Mrs. Hunter from her home—had been brought over, by the doctor's direction, to supersede a miserable old rattletrap of an instrument of which she had been fond. The doctor's thought had been that

the jangled tunes might make wilder the discord in the jangled brain, while the true, deep harmony of a perfect instrument might prove beneficial.

All experimental and medicinal use for the piano had ceased with the removal of the unfortunate lady; but the instrument still remained at Manningham. He was too busy to send for it, the doctor said, and, besides, had really very little use for it. Two-thirds of its time it stood untouched, which was bad for its constitution. For daily companionship he had his violin, and, when he wished accompaniments, it would be far easier to drive out to Manningham with his violin case than to poke about for a pianist and convey him—or her, as the case might be—to his own house. For the present, at least, they must oblige him by allowing the instrument to remain where it was.

Irène had been drawn into intimate relations with the family, and was a man gifted with sympathetic insight. He could realize to the full what a well-spring of joy and comfort an instrument can be to a lonely woman with a musical soul. It was supplying a voice to sorrows otherwise dumb, and spiritual hands of helping to burdens which must be borne concealed.

The perfection of kindness confers benefits, as the sun gives light and heat, through mediums so pure and fine that the recipient can absorb it undisturbed by personal considerations.

As Hunter entered the room a tall young woman rose from the piano stool and advanced to meet him with a pleasant word of greeting. She was his sister, fifteen years his junior, and they two alone represented the Hunters of their generation.

The father's eyes glanced swiftly about the room. Anna Hunter smiled, and replied to their mute inquiry at once.

"Ned's in the kitchen. Aunt Ceres is in an amiable mood to-day and graciously permits Ned and Shandy to watch her make cakes. I looked in just now and Ned had a shingle in his lap for a rolling-board, and was further accoutered with a grimy lump of dough and the biggest brass thimble you ever saw for a cake cutter. He was supremely happy, and Shandy was cooking the products of his skill on the kitchen shovel."

Hunter smiled in his turn and disposed of himself in one of the Pamunkey chairs. In reply to his sister's questions he gave a succinct account of the doings of the afternoon. He liked talking to her. She had as a natural gift that which is

usually acquired by social training—the art of listening “with lips that can wait, and eyes that do not wander.”

“Irène looks badly,” he said, after he had told her of their meeting, and of the doctor’s bringing him home. “He has had a tougher time than anybody realizes—and he takes no more care of himself than a savage. He stopped outside to listen to your song, but he wouldn’t come in. There was a case waiting.”

The girl smiled with her eyes.

“I’m glad it happened to be a song he’s fond of,” she said heartily. “If you had come ten minutes sooner you would have been greeted with scales—and even Dr. Irène’s politeness can’t denominate them other than a necessary evil. I’m sorry he couldn’t stop. It’s weeks since I’ve seen him.”

Her tone was sufficiently interested and sympathetic; but there was in it no keen edge of anxiety.

“Yes; he’s pretty well drawn out and bleached,” Hunter repeated. “It worries me more than a little. In his position a man has need of all the physical force he can muster. The strain is so constant and so terribly heavy.”

“He will go on to improve now that he can be

out again, I hope," the girl said. "A nervous temperament, like his, has astonishing endurance and recuperative ability. We'll be having him as robust as ever soon, and you must keep your eye on him, and give him lectures on the duty of taking care of himself. He will submit to a good deal of lecturing from you, brother."

She rose, even in the act of speaking, and went to the window. The atmosphere was darkening, and there was a preliminary growl of thunder, like an opening gun when a battery has been wheeled into position. The kitchen was in the yard and she turned, with the remark that she must have Ned brought in. The little fellow was nervous in storms. His father rose at once. He would go for the child himself.

As he was about to quit the room, a thought caused the light of anxiety to leap upward in Anna's eyes. She stayed him.

"It's dangerous in the swamp, Robin, when the wind is high. Trigg won't have time to get through, I'm afraid; the canal doubles and twists so. If it comes on to blow what will become of him? Where will he shelter?"

"On Manitou Island, I reckon," Hunter responded easily, "he could make that without trouble and there's a camp there. Trigg's an old

swamper. There's no danger of his coming to grief through weather. He knows how to look out for himself well enough. I'm never uneasy about Trigg."

The woman's face showed that she did not share his confidence. Left alone she leaned on the window-frame, holding the curtains apart with her hands and pressing her face to the glass so that she might as far as possible explore the gathering gloom. The thunder growled again and the lightning ripped the clouds open in a long jagged rent. Anna caught her breath and a swift shudder swept over her from crown to instep. She pressed closer to the glass, and with the eyes of her soul tried to see into the swamp.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A LOVER.

IT was late in the afternoon of the following day when Trigg returned. He seemed preoccupied and, in reply to questions, briefly stated that he had been in the swamp during the storm and had sheltered on Manitou Island. It had been severe, he said; a tree had been struck near the cabin, and the wind had played the mischief further along. He had remained on the island until the worst was over and then had gone on to Colonel Sturgeon's. The swamp was an unholy place in a storm; he had nearly been bitten by a rattlesnake.

He made no allusion to having seen Drake Reeny in the swamp. It seemed useless to stir up trouble for the fellow before there should be need. The poor creature was half-witted anyhow, and well-nigh irresponsible. He would wait a bit and see if anything should happen.

Nothing did. One eventless day followed another until a week had passed. Trigg went daily

to the swamp, remaining a long or short time, according to his luck with his gun. He always brought back game, a good portion of which found its way to Dr. Irène.

There had been no meeting between the men, although Irène had written Trigg a note of thanks for the game, and once or twice sent him a message. The exposure on the night of the storm had given the doctor a serious set-back and he was again confined to the house. Anna suggested to her brother that he should take Trigg with him in one of his semi-weekly visits; but both men appeared to shrink from the proposal. There was no necessity, Hunter explained, he could say all that was proper for both sides. Trigg had better stay away for the present. Then Anna understood that her brother was afraid the young man, once within the walls of the asylum, might insist upon seeing his sister, and that, perhaps, the doctor considered it a risk.

Trigg himself appeared to have the same idea. He had avoided the subject, as a man wounded in a sensitive place will avoid painful contact; but on the night before he left home again he voluntarily introduced it. Hunter had volunteered to put the boy to bed, so that the young people were alone on the veranda together. It was a still

night, with a half-full moon, and the air was perfumed with the breath of flowers; there was in it a tender warmth, a sensuous, exquisite sweetness. The murmur of Hunter's voice, crooning inaudible words, came to them from a window above, like ripples of sound, just touching, then leaving, the shores of an infinite silence.

The man sat on the upper step, with his shoulders supported against a pillar, and the girl on the step below him. Her head rested against his knee and, as they talked, she drew the arm which he had thrown about her close and held his hand in both of hers. The pair were engaged, and it was an understood thing that as soon as Trigg should be in a position to support a wife the marriage would take place. They were nearly of an age, with a few month's disadvantage on the girl's side, and so dissimilar that it was marvelous that an attraction between them should have been generated. To outward seeming there was no point of contact save youth and propinquity.

Trigg's head was thrown back against the pillar and his eyes followed the sweep of the lawn. His thoughts seemed far away from the sweet face against his knee. The moonlight glorified the world and, perhaps, it influenced his mood unconsciously and he *felt* the presence of which

he appeared unappreciative. He loved her as tenderly as he was capable of loving, and valued her second only to worldly success. He trusted her too, absolutely, unquestioningly, while his attitude toward the rest of the world was critical and slightly antagonistic.

And, such as he was, she loved him with all the strength of a loyal, enthusiastic nature, and, as yet, had found in him no lack. She was gifted with the power of reflecting her own characteristics on other people, and of crediting them with everything she was herself.

Trigg's words were not specially lover-like. He had been telling her some of his plans. The following day he would return to the city, but not to work at the same place as formerly. That drudgery was over, thanks to his own pluck and energy. It had lasted three years already, which would be that much of his life thrown away but for the fact that he had learned business methods and made some valuable acquaintances. It was through one of these that he proposed to work himself into something better and more remunerative. At last he had found a gap in the quickset of circumstances through which to escape into the road leading upward to success.

He did not say that his efforts were, or would

be, for her sake, that his longing for prosperity was instigated by desire to make life beautiful and easy for her, that success was valuable only so far as it could be made the servant of love. But she was quite sure that he intended her to understand all that and so entered happily into the hopefulness of his mood, supplying all his deficiencies, unconsciously, out of her own abundance. She did not even notice that he confined himself to generalities, and that, barring the fact that he was going into some new business under the tutelage of a man named Anselm, who had to do with shipping and fisheries, she knew, with certainty, absolutely nothing. She was pleased with the man's name, her fancy catching it, when it was first mentioned, and twisting it into a harbinger of good, because of its significance.

"Anselm," she repeated, "that's German, and it means 'the protection of God.' I'm so glad! It's like an omen. What's his first name? I hope it fits the other—is harmonious."

Trigg laughed.

"You are as superstitious as old Aunt Ceres," he said amusedly. "Always on the lookout for signs and wonders. What have names got to do with people, beyond being a convenience? It's

foolishness. If *self-protection* be a law of God, however, Mr. Anselm will toe the mark every time. He's as keen as a whetted razor. I never saw a fellow with a better head on him for business. His first name is Javan—which is Hebrew. Now, what do you make of that?"

Anna could make nothing of it, save the fact, which Trigg supplied, that Mr. Anselm, although American born, was of German-Jewish origin. Her knowledge of name significations was limited. She gayly maintained her position, that cognomens might be ominous and that this one would bring them good. So far, Trigg agreed with her. He intended that the Anselm connection should have substantial results and he had faith in his own powers of guidance. He could have told her that god-like elements are not essential to the conducting of business at the present day, that such elements, on the contrary, would be vastly inconvenient, and often impede the running. But he did not. He preferred that she should remain as she was, full of tender enthusiasms and guileless of masculine short-cuts and lapses.

The talk, at last, turned homeward. It had always been a favorite scheme with Anna that they, Trigg and herself, should, in coming years, enable her brother to lift the mortgage on Man-

ningham so that it might pass to little Ned according to the family precedent. Her love for the old place, her pride in it, and in her family traditions amounted to a passion. Trigg always acquiesced, without her enthusiasm, and actuated by quite other motives. He was quite willing to do for his own, even to make sacrifices for them within limits. He was fully alive also to the fact that it had been his father who had involved Manningham. Added to which, if in his breast burned an unselfish love for any human being, it was for the sister who had been to him as a mother.

It was of her that he thought, as his eyes gazed into the distance and his arm lay across his sweetheart's shoulder.

"What sort of place is that, Anna?" he questioned, breaking a silence that had fallen between them. "I mean where Mabel is? Are the——" he paused, shrinking from the word *patient*, and altered his phrase. "Is it comfortable? Are all the arrangements as good as they can be made?"

"Absolutely so," Anna replied earnestly. "I have been there many times. It is a beautiful place—the old Willard mansion, you know—and has been enlarged and splendidly fitted up. They have every appliance for convenience and com-

fort. The State has spared no expense to make it a model institution. Dr. Irène is a specialist, a man high in his profession. He has been in charge for two years now and has things well in hand. The whole corps of resident physicians are skilled and efficient."

"And Mabel herself. What are the arrangements about her? I didn't like to question Robin. It cuts him up so. I want to know if I—if anything——" he paused abruptly, and his chest heaved.

The girl half rose, and turned, still resting against his knee, so that she could face him. His thought for his sister was beautiful in her eyes. Her face showed fair and tender in the moonlight.

"Everything is being done all the time," she said gently, "she has a separate room, fitted up with her own things from here. I attended to it myself. Robin is there as often as possible, and I go. She has a special attendant and Dr. Irène keeps her under his own eye. He takes particular interest in her case because of the——" she broke off her sentence, glanced away from him, and then went on impulsively. "He has been so good to Mabel—Dr. Irène, I mean—so patient and faithful, doing everything for her, *everything*."

Trigg did not, apparently, notice the break in her sentence, at all events he made no comment. The moonlight showed him that her lips quivered and that her eyes were full of tears. He drew her to his breast and held her with a close pressure. His eyes, at last, were on her eyes and he bent his head until their lips met.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE HOUSE OF IRÈNE.

DURING the momentary lull which followed immediately upon the execution of Louis XVI., when Girondists, quivering with dismay and uncertainty, stood supine, watching the coalition of destructive agencies which had developed beyond their power of control, and Jacobins, exultant with the success of their attack upon the king, drew back a little, as a tiger gathers himself together for a fiercer spring, one Jean Lacroix Irène, cadet of a noble house, surgeon of repute, and stubborn Royalist, came finally to the conclusion that France, and notably Paris, had ceased to be a desirable place of residence for one who entertained a pronounced affection for the murdered monarch, and also for the head upon his own shoulders. He thought the matter over first alone, and then, with closed doors and the watchful glances which men learn to cast about when they distrust the very air they breathe, he con-

sulted with his family and took the vote, pro and con.

The family consisted of Irène himself, his wife, a woman also of noble blood, and his younger brother Pierre, a student from the provinces and a man of no special strength. There were in addition two young children, boys of six and eight, but they, of course, were omitted from counsel.

With the material in hand Irène's determination, naturally, impressed itself as the result of the conference. His family fell into line and *con amore* voted for emigration. The initial move was to Havre, where Madame Irène had kindred; but when the political atmosphere grew blacker and more perturbed, it was additionally decided that the family should voyage further afield. Somewhere about the year 1795, therefore, they came over to America, choosing South Carolina as a place of future abode, instinctively moved thereto by the French tone given to that State by the influx into it of Huguenots. To the self-exiled Frenchman it seemed that in South Carolina he might find a natural *habitat*, as though it were a sort of American annex to his mother country.

Fortune favored them and they settled in Charleston, where Irène's skill, supplemented by such reputation and wealth as he had brought

with him from France, ere long enabled him to engineer himself into a lucrative practice. Pierre Irène, the brother, after a couple of ineffective years in Charleston, drifted away to Barbadoes, where he succeeded in establishing himself in the sugar trade.

To the original emigrant and his wife no progeny was born save the two sons brought with them from France. Of these Eugene, the elder, in due course adopted his father's profession and eventually succeeded to the paternal practice. He married a beautiful South Carolinian, of French extraction, the daughter of a rice planter, and from the pair was descended the cerebral scientist, Jean-Marie Irène, who had charge of the asylum for the insane, situated near the village of Morley, in a neighboring State.

The second son of the emigrant, called also Jean Lacroix, from accounts, seemed small credit to either himself or his belongings. He was an impulsive, self-willed fellow, whose principle genius appeared to be for dissipation, and for getting himself into trouble with the municipal authorities. Being a lovable man, withal, warm-hearted and affectionate in his disposition, the family bore with him for years, and it was only when an ultimate, in the paternal opinion, had

been reached in Charleston, that he was quietly shipped as super-cargo to Barbadoes, where Pierre Irène was instructed to keep him until his ways should be amended.

Whether that process was never satisfactorily accomplished, or Jean became reconciled to expatriation, is an open question; but certain it is that from the time he sailed away from the port of Charleston unto the day of his death, his family beheld him in the flesh no more. During the life of his parents, intercourse, infrequent it is true, owing to various reasons, was maintained, and at the death of Pierre Irène, which took place when his nephew had been under his charge a half dozen years, there was talk of Jean's return; but it lapsed, as did the correspondence, when, in course of time and nature, the exile's parents also joined the majority. The brothers, never very congenial in tastes or habits, drifted utterly apart, as will inevitably happen when thought, circumstances, and daily interests in no sort interplay. To the younger generation the fact that there was, or had been, a collateral kinsman settled in Barbadoes stood unsupplemented by aught additional in the shape of personal details.

In South Carolina, the family had grown like a narrow-necked gourd, small at one end, bulging

a little in the middle, and small again at the other end. In other words, the center generation could show more members than the one preceding it, or the one following. As far as he knew, Jean-Marie Irène, physician in charge of the Morley asylum, was the sole male representative of his name in America. A fact which to the maids and matrons of Morley, and its environs, appeared to make it peculiarly incumbent upon Dr. Irène to marry. Of what use, they argued, was it to distinguish a name, as Irène undoubtedly was distinguishing his, if there was to be no living representative when the doctor should have been gathered to his fathers? Utterly trivial and unimportant families might pass away and never be missed, but distinction should be perpetuated in flesh as well as in spirit.

Heretofore the doctor had proven himself unappreciative alike of the interest he evoked and of his own opportunities. He was innately courteous and responsive because of the Gallic suavity of his blood, and impersonally so because of intellectual absorption. Women with normal brains and rational action interested him far less than did their more unfortunate sisters, and, as the popular desire was rather for the position of *personal*, than *professional* charge, the doctor's

attitude toward the sex was felt to be discouraging.

Mrs. Colonel Sturgeon, a young married woman of the vicinity, voiced the prevailing feminine sentiment in discussing the matter with a friend.

"It's doubtless charming, and would be a great triumph to interest a scientist," quoth she, "but if a woman has to go crazy to do it she's apt to pause and reflect before embarking on the enterprise. And reflection would be bound to result in no embarkation. It's a real pity, too, for the doctor would make a capital husband. He's so quiet and absorbed he'd let a woman run her house to suit herself and never dream of meddling."

The friend, a woman of years and experience, the wife of the clergyman of Morley, smiled, as she glanced up from her sewing.

"Is that your idea of marital perfection?" she questioned.

"Not altogether. But absorption, within bounds, is no bad thing. A fussy man about a house is as disconcerting as a glycerine cartridge—one always trembles on the verge of an explosion. Irène would never do that. He has too much respect for mental equipoise. It's a shame he should be so hard to captivate! I want to

see him in love—foolishly in love, like other people.”

The clergyman’s wife, Mrs. Gale by name, looked quizzical.

“How about his reputation as a specialist?” she queried. “When he quits the brain for the heart there will be great disturbance in the scientific world and all the *medicos* will grow panicky with the necessity for readjustments. I’m not sure but a convention will have to be called to vote resolutions and inaugurate discussions. Jestng aside, however, you may see him in love yet, my dear. Why not? He’s only a man, after all, and unto every man born of woman shall come his appointed love season. But you’ll never see him foolish. Jean Irène isn’t built for folly.”

“That remains to be proven,” Mrs. Sturgeon declared. “A man in love can’t help being foolish. And he oughtn’t to try. It’s swindling the on-lookers. But I don’t believe Dr. Irène has any appointed time. Or else it’s over. He’s past his first youth, you know, and was before he came here. He must be every day of thirty-eight years old, and only two of those years have been passed at Morley. Yes; by his brutal insensibility to our charms I’m driven to the conclusion that the doctor’s romance time is over, and that, from this

time forth, he's going to perch on an intellectual altitude and bid a proud defiance to love and ladies."

"That may be," acquiesced the other. "Only I maintain that should Irène's love-time be still in the future he'll come out strong. He'll love like a mediæval knight rather than a nineteenth century gentleman. You mark my words."

"I will, if I get a chance," the other matron declared, "but I don't believe there's a woman in Morley capable of giving me opportunity for observation."

Which conclusion subsequent events branded as utterly fallacious.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE BEGINNING OF IT ALL.

MAN, big with self-derived intelligence, takes counsel with his own spirit and lays down laws anent the course his life shall take, holding himself, unconsciously, as a god whose decrees shall be immutable. And Nature, unhasting, unresting, in her endless work of construction and demolition, smiles, as an adult will smile over the dictums of a child, and quietly brings about a set of circumstances which force him to eat his own words, nullify his own acts, contradict his own conclusions, and recognize, with meekness he it hoped, the fact that there is no such thing as fixity possible in time, or probable in eternity.

Dr. Jean-Marie Irène, steeped to the eye-lids in science and given over, brain and soul, to search into the arcana of things, had come to Morley in pursuance of an existence clearly and sharply mapped out for himself. He had made the demarcations and boundaries of work and investigation painfully distinct, and balanced the possi-

bilities against the limitations of mental development and research with the nicety and dogmatism of a theorist. All else he had relegated to the limbo of the undesirable, and set down as unexplorable country given over to prodigies and illusions and rendered alluring chiefly by creations of the imagination.

Domesticity, and all the emotional fluctuations which precede it, he consciously, and with intention, determined to eschew. Such vagaries might make satisfying the lives of the uninitiated, but for those who had access to the sanctuary of the temple of knowledge they must be as unprofitable dalliance by the wayside when the body is girded for a long journey.

This attitude of mind, over which doubtless love and nature rejoiced while they bestirred themselves for its overthrow, lasted Irène exactly one year, during which time he made the acquaintance of most of the inhabitants of Morley, sane and insane, and drifted into friendship and intimacy with Robin Hunter. Then, unwittingly to himself, along the horizon of his life, a faint glow, like the far-off reflection of light, began to turn the atmosphere rose-color, as with the oncoming of celestial dawn.

And the beginning of it all—to follow Irène's

own precedent of tracking things to their inception—was in this wise :

Across from the homebuildings at Manningham, over in the direction of the swamp, lay an unused field which, with time and neglect, had gradually become overgrown and reduced to the forlornness of a pine barren. The acreage was large and at one time the field had been accounted fairish soil, although never of the best for agricultural purposes, from its tendency to put up in scrub the moment it was left to itself. The land was rolling, lifting itself into knolls, and then sinking gradually into hollows, never very deep, and rather, in effect, like the eddyings and uprisings in a caldron when the liquid it contains approaches boiling point.

The growth which covered the field with some density was of the scrubby sort indigenous to run-down lands at the South and known as "old field pines." None of the trees were lofty, even with twelve or fifteen years' growth, and they stood close, in places, and branched low, interlocking, and well-nigh throttling one another. On most of the trees the lower limbs, from lack of breath and space, were sere and brown, dead, for the most part, and giving, with their verdant tops, to an observer, pretty much the same sort of shock

which is given by the sight of paralyzed limbs surmounted by a vividly living face. The earth beneath was covered thick with pine needles, which yielded softly to the tread and gave out an alluringly fragrant odor.

Throughout the eerie grove there was stillness, and a strange, mysterious charm, which had in it nothing suggestive of the feeling of exaltation produced on the imagination by the cathedral effects of a real pine forest, and yet, in its own way, was distinctly dominating. It was the domination of sadness, waste, and decay, powerful, in a sort stimulating, and yet to be avoided.

Such as the place was it became the favorite resort of Mrs. Robin Hunter after the physical breakdown consequent, it was thought, upon the distress and anxiety attendant on the accident to her little son and the loss of her infant. She was a loving-hearted woman, enthusiastic in temperament, and given to allowing herself to become absorbed in whatever she might have in hand, particularly if the work should have direct reference to an object of her affection. She was anxious natured also, and ill-regulated in her anxiety, having no realization of the importance of checks and balances, or the necessity for equipoise. To use a pretty old adage, she always "crossed her bridges

before she came to them," and, in imagination, endured a threatened trouble many times over before she was called upon to brace up to meet the reality. The family poverty weighed upon her, as did the knowledge that the misfortunes had been inaugurated, in a measure, by her own father, and the constant girding against the existing state of things indulged in by her young brother, who was as dear to her as her husband, or her one living child. Not that Trigg was an habitual grumbler, far from it. He kept his thoughts and ambitions pretty much to himself, and beyond an occasional fierce fling at fortune, endured stolidly. But his atmosphere was perturbed and rebellious, and his sister, loving him, felt it, and under its influence her mood slowly darkened, trembled, and grew somber, as will water when a storm broods and lowers in the atmosphere. Love-driven, she laid her slender strength to the wheel, trying her poor best to aid its cumbered revolutions, and hiding her efforts jealously lest the pride of husband or brother should be wounded.

A disposition of this sort, set amid surroundings such as encompassed the life of Mabel Hunter, is peculiarly unfortunate when there is in a family an hereditary predisposition to mania.

The approach of mental malady is so insidious that the initial symptoms usually pass unnoticed, even affection, keen-sighted as the *Ceryle Alcyon* when at length aroused, being blinded by habitude. Allowances are nearly always made in wrong places, and people are tender and patient with "nervous depression" and "infirmities of temper" when they should be up and doing to eradicate germs of disease. When Mrs. Hunter's physical infirmities began to interact with her mental conditions, making her irascible and difficult, her husband and sister-in-law, out of deep love, were tender and considerate with her, but they failed to recognize that mind and body were playing recklessly into the hand of disease, or to remember as significant the fact that three of her ancestors, in different generations, had died in madhouses. When its usefulness as warning was long past, memory of the fact came to them, quickened into pregnancy by the importance which it assumed in the eyes of Dr. Irène.

Realization of how matters stood with her sister-in-law was thrust upon Anna Hunter one afternoon in the October following Irène's installation at the asylum. Trigg Bartram had been away in a distant city for something like two years, striving to make of his energy and discontent levers to

hoist himself into better conditions. Little Ned's trouble too was old, accepted as a thing beyond remedy and to be endured as best they might. Hunter had secured for him a stout wagon, constructed after an idea of his own, which afforded at once comfort and support, and the service of a little negro boy, a son of the woman who had been Ned's nurse. His mother kept him with her most of the time and when she would wander about in the pine barren would make Shandy draw the little wagon after her. Most of the cares of the household had devolved upon Anna during her sister's illness.

The girl stood on the veranda leaning against one of the columns. She was alone in the house, for it was early in the afternoon and her brother's classes usually detained him until much later at that season of the year. Mrs. Hunter and the children, little Ned and his attendant, were out walking. The doctor, not Irène, but the family physician, had recommended them to keep the child as much as possible in the open air. They hoped also that it would be beneficial to Mabel.

The light in Anna's eyes was happy and her attitude bespoke contentment. There had been letters that day from Trigg written in more hopeful vein and hinting at a possible visit home.

The atmosphere showed the approach of Indian summer in long, languid distances and a purple tremulousness of haze. The roses around the veranda were in the glory of autumn blooming. A long, trailing branch, rich with salmon-hearted beauties, lay against the column above the girl's head and, swaying gently with the breeze, cast shifting shadows over her hair and garments. Out on the grass a peacock strutted to and fro, with his tail unfurled and his beautiful neck thrown proudly back so that his crested head and the glorious blue of his breast might show out bravely against the royal richness of purple, green, and bronze of the tail plumage. The golden sunshine enfolded him, bringing out exquisite shadings, as the creature moved, and glinting here and there about him with marvelous jewel-like effects. Anna watched the bird's maneuvers, singing softly the while in an undertone, the musical impulse doubtless evoked by the chromatic harmonies whereon her eyes rested.

After a moment her attention was arrested by the sound of hurrying feet, speeding through the house, as though in search, and the quick opening of doors.

She turned her head and called, not frightened, but a trifle anxious, because little Ned was still subject to sudden spells of acute, almost danger-

ous suffering, and the hurrying feet were naked and those of a child. The idea flashed through her mind that Ned was ill and her sister had sent Shandy to the house for aid. She hastened in to meet him and learn the truth.

In the hall she encountered the messenger, almost ran against him in fact. The boy's countenance had taken on that ashy look which terror or sickness always brings to a black face, his eyes were wide with eagerness and alarm, and his breath came in panting sobs, as though from heavy running. At first Anna could not make out what was wrong; the boy's words were so disjointed; but when his meaning broke on her she caught at her side, as one who feels a sudden pang, and paled, with a gray pallor, like that of a three days' corpse. In an instant, however, she had rallied and issued an order, clear and sharp—Shandy must get a horse and go for her brother and a doctor at once. If there should be no horse in the stable he must run to the village on foot; not a moment must be lost. He must bring the first doctor he saw; any would do; only he must hasten.

Then she dashed out of the house and took her way toward the pine-barren, running, with her arms clasped close to her sides and her head forward, steadily, and very fast.

## CHAPTER IX.

"YOU MAY TRUST ME."

IN the stable, fortunately, there was a horse belonging to one of the tenants, a raw-boned brute, but tractable and fleet of foot, which Shandy, troubled by no ceremonious instincts, bridled at once and mounted bareback. The owner lived a good half mile away and there was no time for formalities. Digging his naked heels into the horse's sides, therefore, and urging him forward with voice and gesture, the messenger sped away, his black eyes shining with excitement and his thick lips fairly quivering with the sentences which were to carry grief and consternation to the heart of his employer. The strange exultation over misfortune, peculiar to his race, dominated him, and all his dramatic instincts were in full play.

About half-way to the village Shandy discovered, ahead of him, Dr. Irène, also on horseback, traveling in the opposite direction from Manningham and going at a sharp trot. Here

was an opportunity not to be lost and, mindful of his instructions, the child urged forward his steed, at the same time raising his voice in a wild halloo to attract the doctor's attention.

Hearing the call, Irène pulled up and waited, half-turning Salome to discover the occasion of the tumult. When the bareback messenger, hatless, and well-nigh breathless, ranged alongside he was ready at once with his questions.

"What's the matter? Where is it?"

Shandy gasped and pointed backward, over his shoulder.

"Out yonder! At Mannin'ham—Mars Robin Hunter's," he explained. "Miss Anna son't me. She's in a mighty hurry. She tole me to git de fust doctor I see'd—an' dat's you! I gwine arter Mars Robin. Miss Anna say you all mus' hurry, please, sar."

"What's the matter? Is Ned sick?"

"No, sar. 'Tain't nothin' de matter wid Ned—more'n he's skeer'd. 'Tis Miss Mabel. She done gone plumb crazy down dar in de piney woods, she is! Jumpin' 'bout an' dancin' down dar, same as er hummin' top. Ned an' me, we was skeer'd een-er-mos' to de'f an' I clipped it up to de house an' tole Miss Anna. We all couldn't do nothin' 'tall wid Miss Mabel, no more'n babies."

"What do you mean?"

"Miss Mabel is. Dat's de  
 name was 'tis! Miss Anna, she  
 was 'tis! She was runnin' same  
 way."

There was something terri-  
 ble and that instant help  
 whatever it might be had  
 in the pine barren,  
 in questions. Bidding  
 his errand quickly, he  
 and sent her across  
 flies, taking fields  
 and only drawing rein  
 the confines of the bar-  
 he was at fault; but  
 path, or rather trail  
 back he turned Sa-  
 him aright.

He thrust spiny arms  
 to bend in the sad-  
 the animal smote  
 the hard ground; the  
 the trees and lay  
 dark earth, like gold

the horse laid

back her sensitive ears and snorted, making as though she would turn aside. Close at hand the land dipped, slipping into a long depression. Irène leaned sideways in the saddle and sought to penetrate the bushes with his glance. In a moment he caught that which had already made itself perceptible to the keener faculties of the quadruped—a rustling among the undergrowth and the breaking of dry twigs as though someone were making his way slowly through the *chaparral*. He waited, and in a moment the small misshapen figure of little Ned Hunter hobbled into view. He was painfully helping himself with his crutches, and his thin, intelligent face was pale with anxiety and exertion. Irène dismounted at once, and stepped forward to meet him.

"What is it, Ned?" he questioned, speaking gently, for he could see that the child was terribly unstrung and almost crying. "Where are they? Which way must I go?"

The boy leaned heavily on one crutch, so as to obtain free use of the other hand. "Down there," he answered, pointing in the direction whence he had come. "Aunt Anna is there, but mamma don't notice her. She is so strange that it scares me almost to death. She isn't like herself at all! Aunt Anna sent me away."

His lips trembled and his big, weary eyes filled with tears; the thin face worked pathetically, and he turned his head away.

Irène spoke soothing words while he fastened Salome's bridle. He was sorry for the little fellow, but had no time to comfort him effectively. He turned into the woods, taking the direction which the child had indicated. It would be better to approach on foot; stratagem might be necessary, and caution.

Parting the bushes with his hands he proceeded for several rods without discovering anything. Then he came to a place where the hollow widened and the thicket was less dense. The trees were taller too, and stood apart, and the ground was unobstructed by stones. A few steps farther it cupped, making a sort of little amphitheater into which the sunshine poured like an illumination.

In the middle of the open space a woman was gesticulating and throwing herself into attitudes. She moved here and there, as though rehearsing a part, and declaimed to herself in a high, unnatural voice. She had taken off her shoes and stained her stockings, in imitation of slippers, with the red juice of a poisonous swamp berry; the effect was ghastly, as though she had stepped in

blood. She had removed her dark dress also, and stood in her petticoats, with her naked arms and shoulders gleaming white and thin amid the fallen masses of her hair. A wreath of pine and juniper twigs crowned her and a handful of glowing marsh flowers lay against her white breast. Her eyes were blazing with excitement, her bosom rose and fell hurriedly, her hands moved nervously, and on her thin cheeks burned spots of fiery crimson.

Irène took in the situation at a glance and advanced instantly to where Anna Hunter stood vainly trying to attract her sister-in-law's attention.

"How long has she been like this?" he questioned.

"I don't know," she answered miserably. "Shandy came to the house half an hour ago and told me. I came at once; but I can do nothing with her."

"Have you touched her?"

The girl made an affirmative gesture, and shrank a little, as though in pain.

"That was a mistake."

"Yes. It was when I first came. I went to her at once; but she fought me off," unconsciously imitating the repellant gesture. "She

cried out that she must work for Trigg, and for all of us, and that I hindered her. Ned was frightened and crying, so I sent him to the house. Something must be done; but I can't think what." Then with a change of voice: "Oh, thank God! thank God, that you have come!"

The tears rushed to her eyes and she turned her pallid face to him with an imploring entreaty, an absolute trust, and the dawning of a mighty thankfulness. Irène's pulses stirred, with a quivering thrill, as though his blood were quickened by wine, and in that instant Anna Hunter stepped forth from the ranks of general womanhood and made for herself a personality in his life. As soul recognizes soul, even when afar off, there fell upon him a dim foreshadowing of that which might be; his eyes responded to her entreaty with a glance of steady reassurance, and he said quietly: "You needed me and I am here. I have come to help you."

Then he turned to the mad woman.

The poor creature's mood had changed; she had ceased declaiming and stood motionless, with clasped hands, looking into space. Her brow was drawn and furrowed with anxiety and she talked to herself in disjointed sentences. From her words, they gathered that she was still dominated

by the old fear, the old desire. If she did not work hard, work continuously, the family would suffer. If she should fail to make money to help along, Robin could not meet the interest and Manningham must go. That would break Robin's heart, and Anna's; there would be nothing for Ned—poor little Ned who could never help himself. His mother must work to keep her boy from being a pauper. Then they gathered that some words of Trigg's had hung in her mind and were fitting themselves to a jangled accompaniment of ideas.

He had spoken before her once of the sums which Adelina Patti made, and Modjeska, and Mary Anderson—thousands and thousands a week, he had said. And the poor creature, in her mania, seemed to herself capable of doing it also. There in the pine barren she was rehearsing; striving to please imaginary managers so as to secure an engagement to make money for those she loved. Even as they watched her, with aching hearts, she began again—singing this time, with a sweet, strained voice, and using gestures and poses the grace of which would have been enthralling, but for the underlying pathos of it all, the terrible, omnipresent tragedy.

Anna's face was white to the lips; she moaned

under her breath and, unconsciously, extended her arms as though to take her sister to her breast.

Irène glanced from one to the other. His professional instinct divined the necessity for lessening, not increasing emotion. In her present state Anna would be worse than useless to him. What he had to do was to humor the patient's delusion, and bring her under the control of his will.

"Go away," he ordered. "She doesn't know me and I can manage better by myself. A stranger always can. You would only excite her more. Ned is up yonder with my horse. She is gentle and leads well. Put the boy on her and go on to the house. Intercept your brother, if possible, and keep him and everybody Mrs. Hunter is familiar with out of the way. I'll humor her and get her to the house by degrees. I'm used to such cases."

He spoke with decision, and issued his directions like an officer giving orders to a subaltern. Anna hesitated an instant and flashed a look at him.

"You will be gentle?" she said. "You won't hurt or frighten her?"

His eyes smiled.

"You may trust me," he answered. "My ten-

derness with her shall equal your own. About this case, I know best and must be obeyed. Go at once."

Without another protest, or a single distrustful backward glance, she yielded to his authority and left him alone with his patient.

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## CHAPTER X.

### THE DOCTOR'S ATTITUDE.

A VERY wise man has declared that "some people's poverty must be touched like a sore place," and it did not take a sympathetic man like Jean-Marie Irène long to discover that the poverty of the Hunters was of this order. They made no pretensions of any kind, nor were they guilty of the untruth of keeping up appearances at the expense of other people. They simply wrapped the mantle of silence about them and held themselves proudly aloof from curiosity or comment.

That this mental attitude, to a man of Irène's caliber, should prove interesting goes without saying. His observation was keenly cultured and his natural insight great. He could penetrate more deeply into human arcana than most men, because his professional training had been largely confined to study of the interaction of the spiritual with the natural. Complexity allured him, and the contrasts of grandeur with littleness, of

truth with falsity which humanity presents. He knew also the danger of extremes, and that pride, useful, nay, invaluable as a standing army, or for police duty, with undue fostering has an ugly trick of usurpation, and will, unless watched, banish love entirely from the government and inaugurate a state of affairs replete with distrust and anarchy.

He was quite willing to allow people all natural reserves; indeed he was a trifle intolerant of such as were incapable of them, not being in that state of celestial innocence which can view the nudity of another unharmed. Certain reservations, privacies, and decorums he looked for and respected, holding them as garments of skins, of linen, and of silk, needful for preservation of the delicacy of the soul. In his friendships, he sought to penetrate no mysteries not willingly unveiled to him; but voluntary exhibitions of trust touched him keenly, and to all such confidence he was as responsive and as faithful as is the flow of water to the law of gravitation.

It was Anna Hunter's faith in him, her instinctive turning to, and reliance upon him for aid in her trouble which planted the germ in his heart from which, later, developed a growth, stalwart and strong-limbed, a veritable tree of life, love-born

and love-fruited. During the months which followed Mrs. Hunter's seizure he grew gradually into the character of family friend and counselor. Hunter, reft from his moorings and adrift on an ocean of anxiety and dread, held to him as a captain, sore perplexed in unknown waters, holds to the pilot in whose skill and knowledge of the intricacies of coasts and channels he has full confidence. And Anna, from no recognizable reasons apart from womanly intuition, trusted him instinctively because she felt him to be worthy of trust, and consulted him in emergencies more than she had ever consulted Trigg, although there was love in her heart for the one man and only faithful friendship for the other.

Foreseeing what the end must be, Irène slipped into full control of Mrs. Hunter's case, and, when it became impossible for her to remain longer in her home, managed the material details connected with her reception into the asylum with a subtlety and skill which reflected credit alike on the tenderness of his heart and the nimbleness of his invention. He demanded service of them also; knowing instinctively how to preserve a balance of power; from Anna he would have many womanly attentions, and from Hunter intellectual assistance in various ways. No stone of offense should

his ministration be, on that the doctor was determined. Intuitively he wished to keep the pathway clear and unobstructed for love's coming.

He did not deceive himself; he knew that love had not come yet; but he had faith in its coming and was willing to wait, regarding himself unconsciously as master of the field, because there was no rival in sight. Of that understood engagement he knew nothing, and of Trigg himself very little. That there was a young man connected with the family, that he was away, at work, in a distant city, and a factor of some force in the domestic life of Manningham, he knew full well; but he had never associated him in any special way with Anna. He had never seen the pair together, and the reserves which he admired were an integral part of the girl's nature. She never mentioned Trigg possessively before outsiders, or kept his photograph where people could see it and ask questions, or fluttered over his letters. Then, too, Trigg had been away from the place sometime before Irène himself had come to it, and before his going had been unpopular rather than otherwise, so that, with him, it had been pretty much "out of sight, but of mind" in his old neighborhood. How was Irène to know?

During Trigg's visit home some interest and curiosity anent the young fellow was aroused in the doctor's mind, but in a surface way, and as in no sort affecting his own life.

The morning after Bartram's arrival Hunter visited the asylum to learn if it would be practicable, or rather permissible, for an interview between Trigg and his sister to be arranged. It was what the young man had come for, Hunter explained, and he dwelt feelingly upon the love which existed between the two and upon Trigg's dismay and overwhelming grief when he had been informed of the calamity which had befallen. They had given the information guardedly, Hunter said, using tenderness and discretion in detail and making the best of it all, because of the taint which might be also in Trigg's own nature. Whether this aspect of the matter had ever presented itself to his brother-in-law Hunter could not say, but he considered it unlikely. Trigg was a practical man, little given to subtleties of thought or investigation. He knew, of course, that in the past Bartrams had gone crazy; but Hunter thought it improbable that he had ever looked at the thing as a possible factor in his own life. It would be better that he should not. A danger apprehended is a danger which will be

given right of way should it appear. So Hunter argued, and the cerebral scientist forbore to contradict him, having too frequently himself stood baffled before the mysteries of heredity.

Irène could see plainly that Hunter was fond of his brother-in-law, and, in spite of fundamental dissimilarity, proud of him, as a father will be fond and proud of a son who is unlike him in every respect, and yet, on the whole, proves himself fairly satisfactory. It prejudiced him in Bartram's favor, as did the young man's efforts to see his sister. No man better than the doctor knew the strain it must be on love and sympathy to see, for the first time, a beloved relative with mind distraught and in ruins. The interview could not be permitted because of the risk of excitement for Mrs. Hunter, but Irène thought well of the young man for seeking it.

The attention to himself during Bartram's stay, and the trouble taken to secure game and the like for his enjoyment, as was natural, deepened the favorable impression, and it was a genuine regret to him that he should be prevented from making the young fellow's acquaintance.

He expressed the same to Anna Hunter when his second convalescence had sufficiently progressed to allow of his presenting himself at Man-

ningham. And he was too much in love himself and too pleased at seeing her again to note the wistfulness of her tone when she said that Trigg's stay at home had been very short, or to detect the significance of the expression which drifted over her face as she quitted the subject.

## CHAPTER XI.

### MONEY POSSIBILITIES—AND LIMITS.

TRIGG went back to the city in a vastly different mood from that in which he had left it. Then every avenue leading upward to the region wherein dwelt success, alluring, illusive, and to be desired, for him, appeared hopelessly barred. Look where he would, the way seemed closed, as with gates of iron and of steel; gates which could swing easily enough to such as had wealth, or even the beginnings of wealth, but which appeared mercilessly immovable to one who strove and cried with the masses on the broad common of impecuniosity.

During Bartram's three years in the city more than one opening had presented itself into which he might have stepped, and so placed himself in the running, had he been able to command even a modicum of capital. But wanting that, perforce, he wanted all. It would have been worse than useless to look to Hunter for assistance. Hunter could barely help himself along, even in

good years, while a succession of bad crops would well-nigh lay him by the heels altogether. Bartram never thought of applying to his brother-in-law; he knew the condition of things at Manningsham too well; and he knew also that, in having given him support for many years and a good education, Hunter had already exceeded the duties usually required of a brother-in-law.

More than once, therefore, it had chanced that Bartram had been forced to stand aside and see another man, more fortunate than himself, slip into the place he might have occupied. He had viewed it with ever increasing bitterness of soul; his natural ambition for success had hardened and sharpened, and his already over-active appreciation of the power of riches had developed until money became his sole recognized standard of value.

He had gone home in a complex state of mind, made up of anxiety and grief about his sister, desire to see his family and particularly Anna again, and a restless dawning of hope imparted by interest in an acquaintance he had recently made. He had found Hunter waiting for him at the Morley station and, even as he stepped from the car platform and shook hands, his quick, practical glance had taken in the other's seediness. His first

thought had been impatient recognition of their circumstances, as depicted in Hunter's coat and hat, and mutinous contempt therefore. After that had come pleasure in the hearty greeting given him and pain in the signs of age, weariness, and suffering which his brother-in-law's face abundantly showed. In everything it was the same; in all the hundred and one details of plantation and domestic management that which struck him first—and always with a sense of grievance and anger—was the poverty. The beauty, the pathos, even the tragedy of the life around him appealed to him scarcely at all. He had no artistic perception of the harmonies of decay, no scientific knowledge of the rhythm of motion which requires depressions between accents, and—of all lacks the most deplorable—no sense of humor, which can strike off scintillations of fun from mere juxtaposition of incongruous elements. He hated it all, singly and collectively, and could see nothing endurable in any of it.

He made no complaints or comments, uttered no strictures, and instituted no comparisons. He knew that they could not help anything: that they had no money and therefore no power to rectify matters. He made the best of it resolutely; but untenderly, and with that sort of en-

durance which makes all the ugly points of poverty loom large and look uglier, and all the better aspects dwindle and hide themselves.

"If Trigg would only laugh," Anna would think at times, half-impatiently, half-wistfully, "things wouldn't seem near so hateful. There's lots of fun and lots of loving kindness in every sort of life if people will only look out for it."

But Trigg had no disposition to mirth. And the girl, in her loyalty and love for him, was well-nigh driven to convict herself of frivolity in that she could take do-withouts and make-shifts lightly.

The justice of that gibe at laughter, in the relegation of its exercise to fools and the likening it to the crackling of thorns under a pot, has to some minds always been open to question. Even fools had better laugh than do worse, and the contents of no pot could boil did not the thorns set under it crackle.

Apparently, Bartram's visit to Manningham brought about change of conditions of some sort. On his return to the city he held his head higher and stepped with more assurance. There was hope in his eye and an under-current of buoyancy in his manner—so much so that Joe Scarth, a

Morley man, and a fellow-clerk, noticed and commented upon it.

"What's up?" he questioned, eyeing Trigg speculatively, a day or so after the return of the latter to business. "I never saw you so chucked-up and satisfied in my life before. What's to pay with you? Confide in a fellow."

The two young men were in one of the storing-yards connected with the establishment of Beswick & Brown, lumber-dealers and shippers. They were receiving and inspecting timber and having it stored in its appointed place. A switch from a trunk-line depot ran into the yard, and on it were several flats piled high with lumber; other flats, empty ones, had been pushed around a curve, to be out of the way. There was a mingled odor of coal smoke, sewer gas, pine-tar, and sawed wood in the air. The yard, with its huge piles of planks and beams, was littered with rubbish of various sorts, and the ground was damp from some rain-fall the previous night. Not a ripple of breeze stirred the dead quiescence of the atmosphere, or relieved the oppression of the heat. The sun, at the meridian, looked down squarely, defying obstructions to keep him out, and making earth and timber steam, like a simmering teakettle. The yardmen were at dinner,

so the superintendents had leisure for conversation.

Bartram leaned against a pile of lumber with his legs crossed, and his hat pulled low to the brow according to his habit. He had given his companion all the home news, even to the local gossip, many hours before. The pair had been schoolmates in their Morley days. At Scarth's invitation to confidence he looked across at him and laughed. He never took Scarth seriously, although there was genuine liking between them.

"What makes you think I'm better satisfied than usual?" he demanded.

"I never think. It sprains my mind," Scarth affirmed, with a grin. "I see."

"What do you see?"

"Your exuberance. And more significant still, your amiability. You haven't kicked against the pricks once since you got back, or given old Cocky," the office soubriquet for the senior book-keeper, "a single short answer. Such suavity on your part indicates a change of heart and I'm curious to know what fetched it about. There are three things that strike to the center of being, and only three—a potent triad—love, religion, and money. The two first are knocked out of play because you ain't that sort of fellow. So money

is all that's left. Has anybody been leaving you a fortune?"

"No! Who would?"

Trigg's query was derisive.

"God knows," Scarth responded piously; "I ain't acquainted with all your kindred. There may be collateral wealth stacked up in Virginia. You may read your title clear to thousands and hundreds of thousands from cousins and aunts up there for all I know."

Bartram rose from his lounging position, and slightly shook himself.

"All the pomp and circumstance of my career is likely to be of my own providing," he asserted. "The best, and the most of my kindred are out Morley way, and you know all about 'em. I've got no family backing. I stand on my own legs, to win or lose in my own battle."

He made the assertion resolutely, not to say aggressively, as though exiling from even his own consciousness all suggestion of outside help. Scarth looked at him with a dawning consciousness of something vastly different from the accustomed routine in the other's sphere.

"You've got some plan of advancement in your head," he hazarded astutely, "and my opinion is that you are going to shake the bag here."

"What if I am?" Bartram demanded. "A fellow can't keep on wages all his life. He must strike out for himself some day."

"Surely," acquiesced the other, "that is if he's dead certain he can make his strokes tell. Along shore is best sailing for small boats though."

But this was just the point of divergence between the men. Bartram had ceased to regard himself in the light of a small boat. On the contrary, he had lately come to consider himself a vessel of full draught, mete for deep-sea voyages. Indeed his mind was set on quitting harbor and adventuring abroad as speedily as might be, and he thought—he flattered himself—that both wind and tide, at last, were in his favor.

With his brain filled with plans and his heart with resolution, he took his way westward as soon as business hours were over. He had an appointment with Javan Anselm, the man of whom he had spoken to Anna Hunter the night before leaving Manningham. In deference to his employer's time he had been obliged to make the appointment for a rather unusual hour, but Anselm had raised no objection. When men desire to use one another they never allow trifles to ruffle the current of their intercourse. It did not suit Bartram to give up his situation with the

lumber firm just yet, nor did it suit Anselm to have him do so.

At a crossing, Bartram consulted his watch and then signaled to a horsecar going his way. It was one of those bobtailed, conductorless abominations which all decent people hope to see everywhere superseded, and as Bartram put his foot on the step he became aware of the approach of a lady, who had also signaled from the opposite sidewalk. He took his foot off again, and waited to hand her in without any special thought in the matter. She was small and very pretty—so much he saw at a glance, and her hands were encumbered with packages so that he had to assist her by the elbow. Inside, they got seats opposite each other, and when the young woman had deposited her bundles in her lap and conquered the resistance of an inscrutable purse mainly composed of steel beads and rings, she bent across and calmly deposited her fare in his hand with a courteous "May I trouble you?" and a pretty half-smile.

Bartram did her bidding, and afterward, when he had resumed his seat, took more special note of her. She was a pretty woman, and costumed to perfection in fabrics rich and costly, of the most approved harmonies of color and showing a

finish of detail and appointment which left nothing to be desired from the tip of the crowning aigrette to the toes of the dainty French boots. An elderly lady, sitting next him, called the attention of another lady to the girl opposite by a cabalistic rise and fall of her brows and whispered under her breath "Paris—from plume to spur," with an appreciative inflection. And Bartram, who had been a denizen of cities long enough to test the full significance of externals, appreciated also, and got more solid satisfaction out of his inspection of the exquisite finish of the young woman's details than even out of the undeniable prettiness of her face. As a bird flashes across a window-space and vanishes the wonder passed through him who she might be. Then a man whom he knew entered the car and hung on to the straps just in front of him and fell into talk about politics and finance.

Bartram was destined, however, to have even his flicker of curiosity gratified. As they reached the corner nearest his destination, he got out, and his male acquaintance with him. The young lady had preceded them and was making her way to the sidewalk with quick steps, and a slight uplifting of her dainty garments to preserve them from the muddiness of the crossing.

"There goes a future millionairess," observed Bartram's companion, indicating her. "That's Anselm's daughter—the fellow who made the big deal in herrings last year. He's counted one of our shrewdest financiers, is Anselm. Self-made, all the way through. His father kept a cake and pretzel shop round on Courteney Street. A little one-eyed place where they cooked things in German style. Old Mrs. Anselm did the cooking herself."

"And that's his daughter?"

"Yes. Nothing self-made about her, to the eye at least. It don't take long to polish off the outside, so that pebbles make pretty fair diamonds to the uninitiated. She's his only child by his first marriage—in point of fact, just now, I believe she is his only child by either. Now I come to think of it, that Athelstane baby died last winter, and I've heard no talk of another."

"Athelstane baby?" repeated Bartram in a mystified tone.

His companion laughed.

"That's what everybody called it—behind Anselm's back, you know. The present Mrs. Anselm was an Athelstane, a fact which has not been allowed to lapse. Like most men of the people, Anselm has a mighty hankering after pedigree;

rates blue blood above par, and all that sort of thing. This last marriage was an affair of convenience all around—blood against money. The Athelstanes are as poor as a setting turkey.”

“I shouldn’t think Anselm the sort of man to care for ethnical values,” observed Bartram thoughtfully. The subject interested him.

“A man usually cares for what he hasn’t got, and can’t acquire,” the other returned. “If Anselm could buy birth and forbears I suppose he’d think as little of them as you do. But he can’t, and he knows it. If he could pile Ossa on Pelion, in the matter of gold, it wouldn’t help him socially in some quarters. That’s the reason he married Constance Athelstane, people say. He wants the second generation of Anselm to inherit a value he can secure for them in no other way. Miss Athelstane—Mrs. Anselm, I mean—is a pleasant woman, but as homely as a Mexican *jacal*. The young lady has the pull over her stepmother in looks. Carrie Anselm is as *chic* as a girl need be.”

“Who was her mother?”

“God knows! Some Courteney Street belle, I reckon. This girl is about three and twenty, I should say. And three and twenty years ago who ever heard the name of Anselm, save in connec-

tion with German cookery The South of that day differed materially from the South of this. Other ideas and other values were dominant—notably the values described as ethnical. Perhaps it was then—in his boyhood—that Anselm imbibed his respect for them. Early habits of thought return on a man, like the black fellow's boom-a-rang, even when he casts them from him."

A few more sentences passed and then the men separated.

## CHAPTER XII.

### JAVAN ANSELM.

BARTRAM went on his way considerably enlightened as to the arcana of the man with whom he had to deal. He had noticed a certain, not absolute deference, but a suggestion of that which might develop into deference, in Anselm's manner to himself, and knowing their relative financial status, he had been puzzled thereby. By nature, Bartram was distrustful, and that which would have stroked another man down the right way and put to sleep his caution, invariably aroused *his* vigilance. Particularly had this subtle, well-nigh intangible quality in Anselm's manner been impressed upon his consciousness during the visit which the former had paid to his . . . Bartram's—old neighborhood.

In this new light, the explanation was not difficult to find. Old Mrs. Sturgeon, the Colonel's mother, was one of those persistently genealogical ladies who never hear a name mentioned without tracking it to its source; and whose principal con-

versational stock consists in legendary lore connected with families of note. That Anselm should have been made familiar with the social worth of the Virginia Bartrams, and also with that of the Hunters of Manningham, seemed a foregone conclusion. Trigg felt confident that, given ten days' opportunity, that which old Mrs. Sturgeon forbore to ventilate and confide to him, relative to her neighbors, would be that with which she herself was unacquainted.

Perhaps the Sturgeons had even given their guest the opportunity to see Manningham. They had driven Anselm about the neighborhood he knew, because on several occasions he had met the party. Trigg winced a little at the thought of wealthy, practical eyes scanning the dilapidation and unthrift of his old home, and then took heart of grace remembering its undeniable antiquity, and a certain stateliness and grandeur about it which poverty had failed to obliterate, or greatly to mar. If Anselm truly cared for that sort of thing he could not fail of being impressed.

For the first time in his life Bartram felt a distinct thrill of gratification in the fact that he had come of generations of gentry. For the first time, consciously, the long line of white-handed ancestors, which extended into a past so remote that

the mind wearied to follow, assumed importance in his eyes. They might help him along, these dead and gone men and women; might be invested with value sufficient to make them a factor in his career. His pride and interest in his forebears had nothing large or abstract about it; that which he regarded was their relation to himself and the use he might make of it.

Bartram's thoughts were nearly always individual. As he walked on he insensibly shifted positions a trifle and determined on taking a different tone with Mr. Anselm. If the astute financier wanted a well-born man to further his schemes he should be given tacitly to understand that well-born men held themselves at a premium.

A half-smile touched his lips as he remembered his scarcely five hours' old repudiation of all family backing. But his talk with Scarth had been of money, and all that the past and future held, or might hold, for him in that line was, and would be, of his own acquisition. He repeated the assertion to himself more than once resolutely. His eyes brooded again and his face gloomed over. After all, money was the main thing. All this other stuff was merely accessory—a sort of stage setting. Anselm's fancy for pedigrees took on in his mind the aspect of a rich man's fad.

Nevertheless, as the elevator moved upward to the fourth floor of the big building wherein was the financier's office, Bartram turned on his finger the ancestral ring, on which was engraved the Bartram arms—a clenched fist holding a hammer—so that the emblematic stone should be plainly visible.

Anselm awaited him in a handsome, well-appointed office, and welcomed him with some show of cordiality. As they shook hands, the rich man observed that they would be entirely undisturbed as even the stenographer had gone home. The room was of fairish size and lifted well above the noise of the street; through the open windows a breeze came which had in it a certain freshness suggestive of woods and water.

For many moments the two men talked commonplace, and internally recorded impressions of each other's value. They had met, in a surface way, frequently before, for Anselm had large dealings with the firm in whose employ Bartram still was, and on one occasion the young man had been specially called in to a counting-room conference to furnish information relative to the swamps and the reported prospect of a falling off in the timber supply therefrom. It was at this meeting that the two men had commenced to take stock of each

other, and, in obedience to a law of business attraction, to converge slowly to the requisite point of union. This was their first regular interview with business intent, and while each felt confident that the other was the man he needed they approached warily, with sundry shys and withdrawals, as horses will who know they must pull together and yet, for reasons of their own, delay the moment of harnessing.

Anselm was a tall man, heavily built, with a massive sort of face, hawkish eyes, and an aquiline nose. He looked German and he looked Jewish; but his manner and address were devoid of any suggestion of either enthusiasm or calculation. He had the reputation of being a square man, but terribly brainy and as keen as a Damascus blade. "The fellow who could get ahead of Anselm, on a deal, would have to be born with eye teeth," the men on the street declared, and their dictum had come to be accepted as verity.

Bartram had need for the exercise of all the acumen with which he had been gifted, and he felt it so. As the talk gradually deepened his wariness increased. He met every movement, carte and tierce, with a skill and dexterity which brought an appreciative smile to the other man's lips. He could see well enough that Anselm was

withholding confidence, and he resented it with the instant resentment a distrustful man always feels at any withholding of trust from himself. He held up his own guard, therefore, and tried his best to break that of his adversary; showing points which Anselm could understand and was quick to appreciate.

After awhile the elder man settled back in his chair with a satisfied air. He had in contemplation an enterprise at once daring and out of the common run of speculation, and he needed the assistance of a strong-willed, clear-headed, observant, and practical man, with the social prestige conferred by birth and education, supplemented by that knowledge of humanity in the concrete which poverty in youth can alone supply. In Bartram he seemed to see the necessary combination, and Bartram he meant to secure, even while his trader instincts forced him to try and drive as sharp a bargain as was possible.

His respect for the young man increased as he came to realize that it was likely to prove diamond cut diamond between them, and it culminated when at a certain point in the conversation Bartram made the calm announcement that, if he should go into the thing at all, he stood prepared to back his opinion of its value substantially.

"I'm not a rich man," he remarked, as one who touches an unimportant point *en passant*, "but I can back my faith in the enterprise. Not so heavily as you think of doing, of course; but still sufficiently to aid confidence."

A change passed over Anselm's countenance, subtle, and yet as perceptible as a shifting of light. He had fully expected to provide all the capital himself—had been quite willing to do so in fact, seeing his way to large money in return should the enterprise prove the success he intended to make it. He had understood that Bartram was poor. Indeed, old Mrs. Sturgeon had produced the impression on his mind that the entire connection had been hopelessly reduced by the war, an impression which the appearance of Manningham went to substantiate. The idea flashed through his mind that the poverty of old families might sometimes be a relative rather than an actual fact. And he was well aware that both the Hunters and the Bartrams were among the oldest families of the land. Old Mrs. Sturgeon might not be so well informed as to her neighbors' pecuniary condition as she fancied herself. At all events, she appeared to have been ignorant of the actual state of the case as regarded this young man.

"How much would you be willing to put up?" he questioned.

Bartram instantly named a sum which exceeded the other's expectation. His heart was beating high, his nerves thrilled, and his hands would have shaken had he been called upon to use them. His face was impassive, however, and the tones of his voice betrayed no excitement. It was his first venture, and naturally it stirred him; but he knew how to hold a strong rein on himself.

Anselm had been leaning back comfortably, with his legs crossed, his elbows spread on the arms of his chair and the tips of his fingers laid together. He now rose, crossed over to his safe, took therefrom sundry papers and drawings and returned to the table. Motioning Bartram to draw his chair up closer he spread them all out and for more than an hour the men talked earnestly and confidentially. And before they arose a distinct agreement, as to risks and profits, had been entered into between them.

At last Bartram's face seemed set toward the winning post, and the track before him looked straight and unobstructed.

As they entered the elevator together Anselm cordially invited the younger man to accompany him home to dinner.

"I don't know whether my wife has any people to-night or not," he said. "Come anyway and take pot-luck with us. I'd like you to meet my daughter."

Bartram glanced down at his morning coat and trousers and declined. Mrs. Anselm might not pardon a lack of ceremony in a new acquaintance, he said, and contrived to throw into his voice an inflection which let Anselm know he was quite aware of the Athelstane social status, and of the necessity for observing all customary proprieties.

Which bit of diplomacy stroked Anselm's vanity the right way and materially added to the favorable impression already made upon him by Bartram's business ability.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### BARTRAM'S DESK.

So high waxed Bartram's spirits that, after his return to his apartment in a young men's boarding house, he wrote a long and more than usually affectionate letter to Anna Hunter, which, while it entered into no detail and committed him to no definite position, let her see plainly that, in some way, his prospects had marvelously brightened, and that, at last, he considered himself justified in counting on success in the not remote future.


One sentence in his letter touched Anna specially, and she laid her lips to it with shy, sensitive tenderness. To her it seemed to show, even more than his open expressions of affection, the depth and earnestness of his love. It was only a few words, but it alluded to the hope he had of relieving his brother-in-law from pressure, and of freeing Manningham for his sister's child.

To many this would have appeared simply a matter of justice; the acknowledgment of an obligation and expression of willingness to meet the

same as speedily as might be; but to Anna it meant all this and a great deal more. To her it implied a delicacy of honor, intensity of right perception, and grateful acknowledgment of love, with an ardent return in kind. Out of the fullness of her own emotional endowment she gifted him, and did him homage, clothing him with all manner of glorious attributes, and knighting him with the royal acalade of love.

It never occurred to her that love for his sister, rather than love for herself, might be the moving spring of Bartram's action in this matter. Mabel, to Anna's knowledge, had never mentioned the mortgage to her brother as an affair in any way pertaining to *him*, while she—Anna—had let him plainly see that her heart was set upon *his* lifting it—not only because of justice, but for the sake of the Bartram honor. Loving him, no wonder she was pleased, and convinced that he was moved to do this thing for love of her as well as love of right.

She said nothing to her brother, save that Trigg was well and wrote in capital spirits, and that he wanted them to pack and send him some articles, books and clothing, which he had left in the closets in his room. She would not spoil their beautiful secret by premature disclosure. It



would be time enough for Robin to know when Trigg should be able to present him with the cancelled mortgage.

So she went her household ways in peace, dispatched a basket of home-made dainties to her unhappy sister-in-law, who could respond to such things; invented an entirely new and most enthralling game for little Ned, and made herself so charming in the home circle that it seemed a pity that Bartram could not be there to see the magic of his own spell.


After supper, and the music which Hunter always required to invigorate him for the drudgery of correcting schoolboy's exercises, Anna repaired to Trigg's room to pack the little trunk which she had decided to dispatch to him on the morrow.

The room was on the ground floor, on the same side of the house as was the chamber formerly occupied by Hunter and his wife, and now by Hunter alone. The little boy slept in his aunt's room on the second floor, in a small bed placed close beside hers. He was subject to sick turns in the night, and causeless attacks of terror, and needed the tenderness and ministration of a woman. There were several chambers on the ground floor, besides the reception rooms, library, and dining room. The house was large and had

been built in a day when domestic service had not to be considered. The room which was called Trigg's was at the end of a side hall and its windows, half a man's height from the ground, looked out in the direction of the pine barren. It was well-furnished, according to the ideas of a former day, and had portraits on the walls which had been brought from the Bartram home in Virginia.

In one corner of the room stood old Mr. Bartram's desk, now Trigg's, a sturdy affair of oak and brass, with a top which let down in front, and many pigeonholes. It had a curious and complicated lock of which Anna could never remember the secret, although Trigg had revealed it to her times without number.

The night was warm, but dark, save for the glimmer of starlight; the moon was on the wane and made her appearance after midnight. Anna opened one of the windows, but left the shutters closed, to keep out insects, which might be attracted by the light. She pulled a small trunk out from one of the closets by the fireplace, dusted it, and set to work, moving here and there for the books and clothing and crooning to herself a cradle-song that little Ned was fond of. She folded the garments tenderly, as women will, and to the breast of a certain coat laid kisses, pressing



her cheek to it, as though it were sentient and could feel and respond to caresses. She put in also little articles for his comfort and pleasure which her own hands had fashioned for him. They had grown up together, so that their present relation was devoid of much of the shyness and reserve natural to an affair which develops from an acquaintance formed after maturity. In Anna's ministration there was, therefore, a good deal of simplicity and frankness.

When her work was nearly completed, Anna crossed to the desk, on which she had placed her lamp, and began twisting and turning what looked to be a brass circle, enclosing a complex star with many serrated points, which was let into the front of the sloping top. The circle had little cabalistic signs upon it, and so had the points of the star, and the whole thing had to be juggled with until some occult combination was made in order to get the desk unfastened. Anna twisted and turned with patience and endurance for fully fifteen minutes before she would admit to herself that she had forgotten the "open sesame." Inside the desk there was a small, old-fashioned dispatch-box, brass-bound and strong, which had belonged to some post-Revolutionary Bartram, whose initials were studded on the lid.

This box Trigg had specially requested her to send, as it contained some memoranda which he particularly required.

Anna leaned against the desk, with her forehead clasped in her hands, and sent her thoughts hurrying about in search of the missing combination, like detectives in pursuit of a fugitive. Once she thought she had it and grasped the revolving circle eagerly only to find, after a few ineffectual turns, that her memory had played a prank upon her. It was very provoking, and she mentally applied opprobrious epithets to herself, deriding her own stupidity.

As she fumbled and fretted, getting more and more incensed with herself, and consequently more incapable of tracking down illusive solutions to abstruse problems, her attention was distracted by a sound and movement at the window, as though the wing of a night-bird brushed against the venetians. She glanced backward over her shoulder and distinctly saw the moveable slats of the blind turned, and slanted so as to give a view of the interior. She called, thinking, for a second, that it might be one of the servants passing by, and curious as to the meaning of a light in that room during Trigg's absence. Receiving no answer she decided that it

must have been Rollicker, Ned's big Newfoundland, who was a social creature, and had a trick of pushing the venetians with his nose whenever he was left outside and felt lonely or neglected.

The incident, in sooth, made little impression on her from the fact that, even as she turned her head to discover the source of the noise, her tricksy memory came to her aid with a revelation which set her smiling. Once, when they had been but boy and girl, Trigg, indignant with her stupidity about this very thing, had made a diagram of the star and circle and supplied it with a key to the combination. This diagram she had put away in her own desk upstairs, and, having little use for it, had forgotten that it was in her possession. She caught up the lamp at once, and proceeded in search of it, pleased that she should be able to fulfill all her lover's behests without having to confess to him, that on some points, at least, she was no cleverer at eight plus twenty than she had been at eight minus the same.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### ANNA FINDS A BREVIARY.

IN her own room Anna was detained for half an hour, for little Ned had aroused from his first nap in one of his sudden fits of terror, sobbing and trembling. His aunt lay down beside him and took him in her arms, rubbing and soothing his poor little limbs and cuddling his thin cheek up to hers. She crooned him off to sleep again with his favorite cradle song and then lay quiet for awhile until his breathing grew regular and restful.

In the library, Hunter toiled over a stack of badly written and worse constructed exercises, and loathed in his soul all languages, dead and living. The great house was empty of all save the white family and little Shandy, who slept on a pallet in a small room adjoining Anna's, where he would be within call.

Anna glanced in at him before she went downstairs again. The little negro lay curled up, knees and chin together, like a caterpillar, under

his blankets. Anna set the door of communication between the children open. Ned might wake again.

Still humming her cradle song, she descended to Trigg's room, carrying her lamp and the diagram of the lock. As she opened the door, a strong puff of wind caused the flame to flicker and jump from the wick, hovering over it, as though the lamp were about to go out. She paused, and shielded it with the paper, until the flame steadied itself, wondering what could have caused the draught. It was as if a shutter had been swept together swiftly and noiselessly, sending a little flurry of wind across the room. Putting her light on the desk Anna glanced around the room, drawing in her breath inquiringly; there was an odor of burnt lightwood in the air which she did not remember to have noticed before she went upstairs—a pungent, resinous odor. The room seemed in the same order in which she had left it, except that a shooting coat which Trigg was in the habit of wearing in his swamp expeditions lay huddled on the floor midway between the open trunk and the door of the closet in the recess. Anna picked it up, unable to understand how she could have dragged it out with the other garments and dropped it without

noticing. The pockets were all turned wrong side out and, before restoring the coat to its peg, she pushed them back into place. It was not like Trigg to be so careless. He had worn that coat the night of the storm when he had been obliged to shelter on Manitou Island, and had nearly been bitten by a rattlesnake. He would have no need for it until he should be at home again. It was not a suitable coat for city wear.

She turned the key in the closet door, still wondering where the smell of lightwood smoke could come from. Then she remembered that the negroes often burned little tar kilns over in the pine barren, and that the wind might be from that direction; doubtless the odor came in with the breeze through the slats of the shutters.

After five minutes' hard study of her diagram she worked the combination successfully, the lock yielded, and she pulled out the brass rods at the sides and let the folding top of the desk down on them. Most of the pigeon holes were full of papers, yellow and dusty, tied in bundles with faded bits of tape and docketed; the business jetsom of several generations, perhaps, stranded and useless.

In some of the compartments were belongings of Trigg's own, boxes of cartridges for pistol and

gun, a flask of powder, one of shot, and a lot of empty cartridge shells. Fishing tackle, in one place, reels, and bundles of line; in another, a black velvet smoking cap which Anna had made for him, and then refused to let him wear, because her brother had said it looked like the thing judges put on when they condemned prisoners.

The dispatch box was right in front, in the clear space between the nests of pigeon holes. Anna pulled it out and set it on the top of the desk beside the lamp. Then she remembered that there was a secret drawer somewhere which used to be her delight in her childhood. A secret drawer used to seem such a delightfully romantic thing to possess.

Trigg and she used to keep their treasures in it, for it was a commodious receptacle of its kind. The miniatures of his parents were there, and those of her own—quaint little oval pictures, painted on ivory and framed, slenderly, in red gold. Her mother's wedding ring was there also. Once, when she had been but a child, it had slipped from her finger, and, for days, she had sought it sorrowing. She had found it at last, under the dining room sideboard, and had made Trigg let her deposit it here for safe keeping until her fingers should be larger. She had often in-

tended to get it from him of late years; but always the thought would come when Trigg was out of the way. She would get it now.

Without a single demur of conscience—knowing how free she had always been made of Trigg's desk—she felt about for the spring and pushed it. The drawer came open a little way and stopped, hung by something inside. Anna slipped in her fingers and pressed down what felt to be a book, and the drawer flew all the way open.

In it were all the little boxes and cases which she knew, but on top of them lay a thing which she did not know—a book, or a box in the semblance of a book, she could not tell which. She lifted it curiously and held it to the light, examining it. It was about the size of an ordinary prayer-book, or breviary, which it suggested in outward appearance. It was covered with vellum and clamped and bound with silver, cunningly wrought. In the center of the cover, on one side, was an exquisitely worked crucifix, in silver, a couple of inches in length. The figure, a gem of handicraft was fastened to the cross with nails of gold, and, bedded in the silver, back of the slightly bowed head of Christ, were diamonds, so arranged that the crown of thorns appeared to scintillate light. On the other side was a silver

shield emblazoned with an heraldic device, and enriched by a quaint motto in Norman-French. Anna examined her find with waxing interest. The quaint French of the motto was beyond her linguistic power, nor could she decide to her own satisfaction whether the device was monastic or simply the arms of some noble family. She rather inclined to the former belief, because of the ecclesiastical aspect of the thing, and had half a mind to take it to her brother and inquire his opinion. Robin was more learned than she, and took intelligent interest in all relics of the past. He might also be able to translate the motto.

She was restrained from following her inclination, however, by the fact that she had chanced on this thing without Trigg's knowledge. True, she had always had the run of Trigg's desk and she had opened it this time in obedience to his directions; but then he had never spoken even to her of having this thing in his possession; he might not want it known yet, might intend it for a surprise for someone—for Robin, who loved such things, or even for herself, who loved all beautiful things. As the thought crossed her she smiled.

Where could Trigg have picked it up, she wondered, and tried to unclasp the cover, feeling sure

that inside were beautiful illuminations, and, perhaps, specimens of that wonderful pen and ink work for which some monasteries were famous. The clasps defied her best efforts, and all she achieved after ten minutes' work was a broken thumb nail. The book must have a combination secret also, and she was not clever enough to find it out. Never mind, Trigg would show her when he should exhibit his treasure, which would doubtless be at Christmas. It was a shame to endeavor to surprise all his secret. It was like spoiling his fun. She would put the book back and not say a word to Robin, or to Trigg himself, if she could help it.

Anna stood nearly opposite the window, with the lamplight falling full upon her and upon the book in her hands. As she turned it about the diamonds flashed in the light. She was so much interested in her discovery as to be oblivious of all extraneous matter, else she must have noticed a repetition of the faint noise which had attracted her attention before she went upstairs for the diagram—the noise as of someone moving the venetians into position to give a view of the interior.

Had she noted the noise and turned she might have seen a small stick thrust through from the

outside and twisted in the curtain so that its folds could be drawn aside. And had she stooped and peered between the slats she might have looked straight into a pair of eyes that were watching her every movement.

As it was she heard nothing and saw nothing, being far from any suspicion that there was anything to see or hear. Once, indeed, that faint, indescribable sensation of uneasiness which comes to us as a warning of unseen surveillance made itself apparent, but she satisfied herself with a cursory glance around the room.

When her curiosity had appeased itself as far as might be with externals, Anna took out the little box containing her ring, looked at the miniatures once more, and reclaiming those belonging to herself, replaced everything, including the breviary, just as she had found it, and closed the drawer. Then she fastened the desk again, never noticing until after she had completed the job that she had left her diagram inside.

She was provoked with herself at first, but finally decided that it would make no difference. Trigg would not be likely to want anything else out of his desk for a long time, and if he should he must send her the combination again. It was stupid of her to lock hers up, but, after all, she

did not care very much. She was too busy wondering about the breviary.

She finished her packing, putting in the dispatch box, locked the trunk and pushed it out into the hall to be in readiness for transportation to the station the following day. Then she straightened up the room, examined the fastening of the shutters and closed the window, thrusting an iron peg through the juncture of the framework so that the sashes could not be parted from the outside. In a great, lonesome house like Manningham, where so few rooms were occupied, it was well to be particular.

## CHAPTER XV.

### A VISITOR FOR DR. IRÈNE.

DURING the months which followed nothing of moment occurred save that early in September a malevolent swamp fever broke out and prevailed to some extent among the poor whites and negroes. The Reenys, closely quartered in a pestiferous cabin, were among the first to succumb, taking the fever in its most malignant type, and giving it vantage ground besides by their manner of living. Of the five children, four were down with the disease at one time, and were so copiously doctored by their mother with brews and decoctions that their cases were rendered hopeless from the first. Two of them died on the third day and then Reeny, mistrusting his wife's knowledge and skill, called in the regular practice. Dr. Irène did what he could, which was, perforce, very little, for, by the time he was summoned, the two remaining children were well-nigh *in extremis*. As he watched the passing of the little spirits, and noted the squalor from

which they were escaping, and the brutish stolidity of the pair who had given them birth, the thought came to Irène with significant force that the operation of a changeless law was in itself a manifestation of beneficence.

Whether or not the idiot son sickened, none knew, least of all his parents. Drake frequented his home very little, preferring the swamp where, during the summer months, he picked up a living much as do the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air. If he tried a fall with the fever, he tried it alone and certainly came off victor, for the timber getters spoke quite frequently of his hanging about their camps. They said that he harbored principally in the cabin on Manitou Island.

Anna strove sedulously to guard her frail little nephew from the infection, but without effect. The peregrinations of a squirrel are not more discursive and irresponsible than those of a callow African, and Shandy, somewhere in his rambles, contrived to pick up the disease and to pass it on to Ned. The negro had it very lightly; but the poor little white boy was one of those unfortunates whose citadel appears open to every foe, and so he nearly died.

All through Ned's illness and convalescence,

Dr. Irène frequented the house almost as a member of the family, going and coming at all hours. The Hunters, brother and sister, learned to lean on him, as a strong rock of support, and to accept his ministrations, with the unconscious egoism of custom, as a thing theirs of right, like the pure air they breathed, or the clear water with which they slaked their thirst. Such a course is natural, almost inevitable with women, particularly when, as was the case with Anna, their affections are already absorbed and their natures devoid of coquetry. Women gifted with insight are rare—rarer still women endowed with ability to shake loose from personal concentration and regard motive and conduct from more than one standpoint.

But Hunter should have known better. A man is supposed to have some conception of values, and also of the principles which regulate just commerce of all sorts. The idea that Irène's ego must be allowed for should have been warningly present with Hunter, since he was fully aware that no man devotes himself sacrificially to a family, with no special claim on him, in which there happens to be an unmarried woman, for reasons of pure philanthropy.

Hunter's obtuseness could only be explained on the ground that, without taking special

thought of the matter, he took it for granted that Irène knew of his sister's engagement. Anna's nature was sincere and straightforward, and she had been thrown much with the doctor, with whom her association was perfectly friendly and unembarrassed. Of course Irène must know. Then too, a man rarely realizes to the full his own sister's attractiveness. It is out of the question that he should.

Usually neighbors jump up love affairs in their beginning and trail them at full cry, but, as has been stated, the doctor was a wary man and fully minded to manage without outside interference. His own hunt was so still that it aroused no neighboring impulse to give tongue. He was trying to make himself necessary to Anna before he spoke, to grow into her home life so that all idea of lopping him off should be impossible. She was learning the lesson of trust, he thought, and he was content to make haste slowly. The expenditure of time and trouble are as nothing to a man whose heart is set on the attainment of a definite end.

The house occupied by Dr. Irène was situated in the asylum grounds, and shared by him with two other unmarried physicians who were his subordinates in office.

The trio were cared for, as to creature comforts, by an elderly gentlewoman of Morley, who had seen better days, but been reduced by the vagaries of a couple of worthless sons to the necessity of earning her own living. She was a notable housewife, and withal a woman of peace, who loved orderly ways and a still atmosphere, so that the doctors were abundantly suited and cherished her according to her worth.

The other two physicians—there were five in the corps, were married men with families, who, therefore, naturally preferred residences outside of the grounds.

One morning in the latter part of October Dr. Irène was interrupted in his laboratory work by a caller. This was unusual—out of routine, and the doctor, being interested in that which he was doing, felt a trifle annoyed. It was the housekeeper who brought up the card, and that was out of routine also.

"Just excuse me, Mrs. Vaughn, and explain to whoever it is that I'm busy," he said impatiently, without removing his eye from the lens of his microscope. "If the person can't call again later, let Cooke or Timberly see him. Its somebody to see a patient I suppose."

Mrs. Vaughn hesitated. In her still way she

possessed a healthy amount of curiosity. This caller was very different from the ordinary asylum visitor—perturbed men and women with kindred among the patients. It seemed a pity to send this stranger away unheard.

"It's nothing professional, doctor," she declared. "It's a gentleman to see you, and he seems anxious and resolute about it. I tried to excuse you, but he set the excuses aside. He said that he wished to consult you about a family matter—that he had come a long way to do so—from Barbadoes."

Irène lifted his head.

"Barbadoes!" he repeated, with awakened interest. "What the dickens can the man want of me? What is he like, Mrs. Vaughn?"

"He's a gentleman," she responded, extending the card again. "And, from his dress, I should say a minister, though of what church, of course, I couldn't tell. He's not an Englishman either, although he speaks English well."

Irène consulted the bit of pasteboard. "French," he declared, "and, possibly, a priest. Some of my people did settle in Barbadoes a generation or so back. This may be a descendant of one of them seeking out kindred. I'd better go down, perhaps, and embrace him."

The visitor, upon inspection, proved to be an elderly gentleman, a priest of the Church of Rome, as he speedily informed Irène, and a Frenchman, which latter fact proclaimed itself. Upon Irène's mooted the question of kinship, he entered a disclaimer at once. His connection with the Irène family was a purely spiritual one, he affirmed; he had been father confessor to the late Mrs. Irène and was so still to her daughter. The Irène men, if the doctor would pardon the remark, had been strange men in their ways; religion had had but little hold upon them. The young lady—Therese Irène was different. She was convent-bred; her good mother had attended to that! She was a fair maiden and pious—a tender ewe lamb of the fold. The priest spread his hands abroad and smiled genially. Evidently Mademoiselle Irène was a favorite with the confessor.

The doctor cut the eulogy short.

"Come," he said, "I don't know one thing about these people. Beyond the fact that I may have kindred in Barbadoes, it is all *terra incognita* to me. All intercourse between the two branches of the family appears to have died out during my grandfather's time. That he had a brother who went to Barbadoes is tradition among us of the

younger generation, but that is all. His name was Jean Lacroix, and he was the younger of the two sons my great-grandfather—also Jean Lacroix Irène—brought with him from France some time about the year 1795. My great uncle, I fancy, must be dead years ago; but he probably left descendants. Is it so?"

The priest nodded.

"He is not dead so long as you think, that uncle of yours," quoth he with a smile. "He was a remarkable man, was Jean Lacroix Irène of Barbadoes. And he lived to a great age—ninety-five—and retained his faculties up to the last. He had been a *mauvais sujet* in his youth, it is said. That perhaps you have heard?"

Irène shook his head. "I know nothing whatever about him," he repeated. "Beyond the fact that he lived, and emigrated to Barbadoes. It will save time, perhaps, and circumlocution, if you will give me briefly the history of the Barbadoes branch as far as you know it. Let us start from the two facts I know and build."

Père Emmanuel bowed. "That perhaps will be best," he assented, and settled himself in his chair as though the tale might consume time in the telling. Irène, likewise, disposed himself to listen.

The information supplied by the priest, succinctly, was this. Jean Irène, having exhausted the parental indulgence by his irregularities in Charleston, had been, early in the century, consigned to his uncle Pierre Irène, a prosperous sugar merchant in Bridgetown. Whether the Barbadoes standard of conduct was less rigid than that of South Carolina, or expatriation had really a beneficial effect, it is certain that Pierre Irène sent home no complaint of his nephew, whom he received into his house and business, and, being a childless man himself, ultimately adopted.

The Irènes prospered, and although the great hurricane of 1831 injured them, along with the rest of the island, it was not permanently. Pierre Irène became a very rich man, and, at his death, his fortune passed to his nephew entire, so that, in spite of his sorry beginning, the family black sheep at forty might have become entitled to the position of bell-wether of the flock could wealth outrank seniority.

As frequently happens with a reformed *roué* Jean married an accomplished and eminently pious woman to whom he was devoted heart and soul. She brought him many children, but only one of them, a son, lived to attain maturity.

In addition to her accomplishments and good-

ness Mrs. Irène was a woman of marvelous beauty, and her influence over her husband was such that at her death he was like a creature distraught, and isolated himself upon a plantation he had, refusing all consolation, and leading, apart from his business, the life of a recluse. His son, called Eugene, after the brother who apparently had forgotten him, was, by his mother's wish, educated in France, where he imbibed certain skeptical notions, which did not, however, prevent him from marrying a young maiden just out of a convent and withal a most resolute Catholic. Indeed it seemed characteristic of the Irène men to like religion in their wives, no matter how nebulous might be their own spiritual condition.

The home of the younger generation had been in Bridgetown, where for years Eugene was active partner in the business, and even after his death his widow continued to make her home there, preferring the greater sociality of city life. Her father-in-law's plantation was in the interior and Madame Irène found its comparative isolation insupportable for more than a few weeks at a time. She was left with two children—a son, Jean Marie, who spent most of his time with his grandfather and was the apple of the old man's eye, and a daughter, Terese. Of the two ladies,

the priest spoke in eulogistic terms; but with the young man he confessed to have small acquaintance.

"Mrs. Eugene Irène is dead, I infer," Dr. Irène observed, thinking that this new family history read like a mortuary record.

"She entered into rest three years ago," the priest replied. "One year before her father-in-law. Over the old gentleman also has been written *hic jacet*."

There was a momentary pause and then Père Emmanuel resumed the theme. Jean Lacroix Irène, it appeared, had been a very rich man—a millionaire, in short. The bulk of the property was in foreign securities, well looked after and very remunerative, for after the death of his son the old man had closed out his business to good advantage, not wishing his grandson to remain in trade. The sugar plantation he had retained, considering it a good investment, and being, moreover, attached to the place. It was under the charge of a competent manager. The estate, entire, was in the hands of trustees, so to remain until Jean-Marie Irène, the testator's grandson, should attain his twenty-fifth year, when two-thirds of the whole was to be handed over to him unreservedly. The other third would, at the

same time, pass to Terese Irène, the old man's granddaughter, who being nearly four years her brother's junior, would then have attained the age of one and twenty.

The will was holographic, and beyond providing for the safe keeping of his money until his heirs should attain, in his estimation, age sufficient to look after it themselves, the old man had concerned himself little. The document was explicit and forceful as far as it went, but the contingency of death was not provided for at all. The testator seemed quite content to allow ultimate reversion to go by natural heirship. The relative place in his affections held by his grandchildren was abundantly indicated by the inequality of the division.

The will had been made immediately after the death of Mrs. Eugene Irène; at which time it was probable that a previous will had been destroyed. There was no mention of the daughter-in-law in the present will at all, although the old gentleman had been attached to her, in a way.

In event of the death of both of his West India cousins intestate, Dr. Irène could see his own importance as a natural heir, but that looked to him too remote a contingency to be taken into account. He could not determine to his satisfac-

tion his own connection with all this, or why the priest should have sought him out. Surely Père Emmanuel had not journeyed from Barbadoes to impart to an absolute stranger census particulars anent a collateral branch of his family; nor could he have come for the equally futile purpose of stating that under a certain set of circumstances he—Dr. Irène—might come into money. With two healthy young lives between himself and the said estate, the doctor felt that this last would be ridiculous.

Aloud he said: "Then I understand that the West Indian Irènes have dwindled to two—my cousin, and namesake, Jean-Marie, and his sister?"

The countenance of the priest clouded. "Yes," he asserted, "as you say, to two—Terese Irène and her brother. Unless, in truth——" he paused.

"Unless what?"

"Unless Jean-Marie be dead. That is what we fear—we his friends and the friends of his sister. He has disappeared, you must know, and left no trace. We search for him—I search for him—and his sister sorrows. It is for that I am come to America—for that I communicate with his kindred. The young man is gone. We find nothing."

Père Emmanuel drew up his shoulders, laid his hands together and then spread them apart, as though exhibiting to the other utter vacancy.

Here was interesting matter with a vengeance.

Irène leaned forward in his chair.

"When did this happen?" he inquired. "Where do you lose track of him? And what can I do to help in the matter? Was the young man looking us up?"

The priest took the questions in turn. On the 22d of January of the current year, he explained, Jean-Marie Irène had come of age. The girl, Terese, was at school in the convent, being still only seventeen and not to graduate until a year later. Jean-Marie had passed most of his life on the plantation, under the immediate charge of his grandfather, and, in spite of his youth, was held to be the one person living who possessed the old gentleman's entire confidence.

The year which intervened between Jean La-croix Irène's death and his grandson's majority had been spent by the young fellow continuously upon the plantation. Jean-Marie was of an unsocial nature, old for his years, imaginative, proud, and exclusive. The young men of the island, his contemporaries, knew little of him; the young maidens nothing. He was known to

have literary and artistic tastes, and to cultivate them; he was thought to write poetry, and, perhaps, to paint pictures; he was morbidly sensitive, and had strange, overstrained notions on various points. As might be clearly perceived Jean-Marie was peculiar.

In February, he had visited his sister and explained to her that he proposed going to the United States and would start immediately. His purpose was travel, he said, and also he wished to look after some matters intrusted to him by their grandfather. In America they had kindred, as she knew. Jean proposed to make personal acquaintance with them.

The brother and sister were more than usually devoted to each other—the *camaraderie* between them was perfect. For a couple of months Jean had been regularly heard from. He had reached Charleston, he was pleased with place and people; but he found there no Irènes. All were dead, or had made homes in other places. It was a disappointment to him. Then a letter had come stating that he had traced one of the name—another Jean-Marie Irène, a man of distinction, who had charge of an institution in a neighboring State. Later on he would visit this place.

This had been the last letter received. Week

followed week, but they thought nothing of it, concluding that Jean was traveling about and, probably, careless about posting his letters. But when months followed weeks, and the silence continued, they had been first surprised, then alarmed. During the summer letters addressed to young Irène had come back to them from the Dead Letter Office at Washington, and a communication from the proprietor at the hotel at which he had stopped in Charleston. The young man's luggage was still there, all save a handbag, and the hotel man wanted to know what to do with it. Irène had retained his room, paying for it in advance, and when he left had informed the clerk that he would only be absent a few days. He had never turned up, nor claimed his luggage, the contents of which was valuable. The hotel man thought the matter looked serious, and had better be inquired into by Irène's friends.

The matter *had* been inquired into, and looked more than ever serious. The bank on which Irène had letters of credit had a good balance to his account, but knew nothing of him. The last draft honored for him, by them, bore date of the morning he had left the hotel; and the amount drawn out was inconsiderable. Detectives had been employed, and, indeed, were still busy try-

ing to work up the case but so far absolutely without result. If young Irène had been swallowed up by the earth, or translated bodily to another planet, or etherealized into vapor and dissipated, he could not have left, of his going, less trace behind him. Apparently, he had vanished from the ken and cognizance of men as a spark driven up a chimney vanishes in the outer atmosphere.

In despair of the efficacy of the arm secular, Terese Irène had finally invoked aid of the arm spiritual. Père Emmanuel, her mother's confessor, and her own, had taken a hand in the search, backed by all the influence and authority of Holy Church.

And so far, on his own confession, he had made no better showing, at solution of the mystery, than did the baffled and exasperated detectives. Nor had he done one solitary thing which they had omitted, save and except bring the matter to the knowledge of the missing man's American cousin.

Not that Dr. Irène either did, or could help him much. The priest remained at the asylum a couple of days, during which time the matter was exhaustively canvassed. Both men considered it more than probable that when the West

Indian left Charleston he had had in contemplation a visit to his namesake. But there, perforce, the matter broke off. There had been no communication, and no visit.

Twist and turn the matter how they would they could make nothing of it. No stranger named Irène had registered at the Morley hotel, and whether, or not, such an one had gotten off at the Morley station any time in the latter part of the previous April no man knew, or had means of ascertaining. Many men—commercial travelers and the like, passed through Morley during the year, and none heeded them. The priest's description of this other Jean-Marie Irène fitted every fifth man in a hundred.

So Père Emmanuel went on his way unenlightened; but promising to communicate, from time to time, with Dr. Irène and report such progress in the investigation as might be made.

In Morley the matter made scarcely any stir at all; a tiny ripple of interest circled a little way and then flattened. Nobody knew the people, and disappearances are common these days. The newspapers are full of such matters. True, this case was peculiar in that the young man had no occasion to disappear. Men of wealth usually make and keep themselves more than apparent.

Two theories alone appeared to fit the case at all; one that the missing man was keeping dark for reasons of his own, unconnected with money, and the other that the missing man had met with foul practice somewhere and was dead.

This last appeared the most likely solution of the mystery, and the few Morley people who spoke of the matter at all decided *con amore* that this other Jean-Marie Irène was dead, and so dismissed him from their thoughts.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### WORD COMES BACK TO MORLEY.

BUT while interest in a stranger—even a mysteriously disappearing stranger, may cool off in a day, interest in a home product, albeit a transplanted and not over popular home product, will hold heat interminably, and at every new impulse boil up to bubbling over.

About this time Mary Scarth, a young woman of Morley, received a letter from her brother in the city, in which he descanted on Trigg Bartram, his business position, and probable prospects.

"Trigg has worked into a big thing here," Scarth reported. "He's chipped in with Javan Anselm, one of the biggest money men of the place. There's even talk of a partnership. God knows how he managed it. He's got something Anselm wants—knowledge, or pluck, or brains. Anselm is the sort of shark that scoops in everything. If there was the ghost of a show I'd say there was money in the racket, but that don't

apply to Bartram. The Lord's poor we Morleyites of the present generation are beyond a peradventure. Indeed Trigg made no bones of saying that all the purple and fine linen of his career was like to be of his own providing. It's truth too, I take it, because everybody knows that Manningsham is mortgaged to the hub, and poor old Hunter has to strain his back to breaking to keep from sinking deeper into the mire. Trigg's sharp though—keen as a brier-blade. Men on the street are beginning to talk about him. If he can keep his head level he'll make big money they say. He's a queer outcome for dear old Hunter's raising. A cornfield negro could get ahead of Hunter on a deal, for all he was so sharp to spot a fellow if he crooked at lessons. Bartram is beginning to go among the money nobs a good bit; dines with 'em, and squires their women around. I'd give a trifle to know just how he got his start."

Bartram's old neighborhood was not so curious as to details. The main fact was enough for them, and they discussed it copiously, adding, unconsciously, to the probability of his becoming a successful man, a man of note, and a credit to his birthplace, every time they repeated Scarth's prediction relative to the Anselm partnership.

They forgot, or at all events they ceased to publicly mention, the fact that Trigg had been unpopular among them; that he had been considered hard, and a trifle unsympathetic and selfish. It is human nature to admire any sort of uplifting, so that when even an unpopular man raises himself above the rank and file, external consideration and oral charity become his portion.

Moreover, the Hunters, in a quiet way, were well liked by the community; they always had been. So that when Trigg's prospects began to burgeon and shoot forth leaves, people felt interested and complacent all around. They complimented Trigg to his brother-in-law, and spoke in congratulatory terms of his prospects. It would be a good thing for Manningham, they said, for, of course, the young fellow would look after his own the very first thing, being fairly a son of the house. And Hunter smiled back at them and said that "the lad was a good lad, and a clever one," and that if he should succeed it would be an exceptionally creditable performance, seeing that he had been, perforce, thrown on himself for a start.

But in his heart Hunter was troubled and anxious. He knew his brother-in-law's weaknesses and predilections as well as he knew his own—

perhaps better. He had raised the boy, and, to a certain extent, watched over and endeavored to influence him. He dreaded financial success for Trigg because he was fully aware that in some respects the young fellow's nature was singularly limited. To him, it seemed that Trigg loved money for its own sake, regarded it as an ultimate, rather than as a means for accomplishing ends. The bigger souled man feared the hardening and annealing which the greed of gain works. Love of wealth, for its own sake, seemed a sirocco which would blast all the tender young growth of a nature, all the buds and blossoms of faith, unselfishness, and love.

Another thing troubled him, although, as yet, he scarcely admitted the matter to himself—that was Trigg's limitations as a lover. It seemed to Hunter that a woman like Anna was worth a great deal more than Trigg was giving her. In his day, men had not put money before love in the way he was beginning dimly to feel that Trigg might be capable of doing. But then, in his day, men had been satisfied with so much less in the shape of worldly gear—and, for the matter of that, so had women.

Hunter did not formulate any of this, nor, as yet, did it get itself into ponderable, or produci-

ble thought. He was a just man; he knew that there had been well-nigh elemental changes in life and character since the days of his youth, and he was, moreover, from habit and association, fond of his wife's brother and disposed to make all allowance for him. His feeling was rather a vague intangible discomfort, and dissatisfaction with Trigg, than any overt acknowledgment that there was legitimate cause of complaint.

And the feeling received an impulse when, at Christmas, instead of coming to see them himself as he had promised, Trigg sent gifts and explanations anent the exigencies of business. Anna took the disappointment gallantly, and justified Trigg out of her abundant love and faith in him. But she was hurt, and a trifle humiliated, as a woman must be when the man she loves shows indifference, or lack of the delicate consideration for her feelings which is the aroma of love.

And her brother saw that she was hurt and resented it; and the more because he was compelled to keep the resentment to himself, and even to appear unconscious of the pain. Under certain circumstances a woman thrusts aside sympathy as though it were an insult. Which Hunter knew. He knew also that, had he been in Trigg's place, no money yet coined could have

tempted him to risk bringing tears to the eyes of the woman who loved him.

To Hunter, it seemed that genuine, downright self-sacrificing love was fast being relegated to the limbo of things obsolete.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### IT MUST BE THAT CHANGES COME.

OF truisms none is more self-evident than that man cannot drive a span with *both* horses in the lead. The thing is impossible. If a team be evenly matched as to size and strength, if both horses know their business and do it, working in with one another, then progress is regular and assured; but if, from the start, the lead-horse be not only the stronger, but the meaner tempered of the pair, the off-horse has a sorry time of it—he gets less than justice all around and becomes heir to ill-usage and reproach. And of all mismatched teams ever geared together for the life journey Love and Mammon are the most so, when Mammon is “under the line.”

During the eighteen months which followed Trigg Bartram’s business association with Javan Anselm the young fellow lived in a constant strain of excitement. Anselm was an old seasoned hand and went from one speculation to another without flurry, plotting, planning, spin-

ning webs, and thrusting out feelers in all directions. For reasons of his own, he took Trigg largely into his confidence, and worked through and with him, convincing the younger man by all sorts of unconsciously subtle methods that he—Trigg—was reckoned a sort of business “mascot,” a fellow with “a lucky hand,” as well as uncommon financial acumen. He introduced Trigg to other plutocrats, who treated him with consideration, invited him to their houses, and turned his head for him by appearing to take it for granted that he was already booked for great commercial success. Trigg took to it all as to a natural *habitat* and enjoyed it and thrilled with it. The intoxication of success got into his system and quickened the greed of gain in his heart until it throve like a wild parsnip, putting out coarse, unpalatable leaves, and perfumeless flowers, all gold color. He entered avidly into the talk about money, and the ways to make, hold, and increase money, and was not shocked or revolted by methods which openly invested all human weaknesses, necessities, even tragedies, with a marketable value.

Most men are held aloof from sin, even from crime, not by recognition of iniquity, but by fear of consequences, hence the readiness with which

men will seize any advantage which may accrue to them, as results of the sins of others less wary. Trigg withheld his countenance and co-operation from many methods which he daily saw put in practice around him, but it was less because he considered them reprehensible than because they seemed to him stupid. Life with Trigg was a contest of who should pull the chestnuts out, and who should enjoy them, and he was well-minded himself to be always a party of the second part. It had always been so. The man had not changed; he had simply developed along his lines of least resistance; and success was only converting the longing for gold into the love of it.

As Joe Scarth had written his sister, Trigg had "cut the old concern" and had his office now with Javan Anselm. A corner of the financier's big room had been railed off and furnished with an extra desk and chair, and both men found the arrangement to their satisfaction. The partnership between them was a closely impending, although not an absolutely accomplished fact. Anselm was learning to depend on the younger man, and to feel safe in leaving many matters to his exclusive management. Indeed, he was beginning to say within his soul—with infinite approval, that the bird who would get ahead of

Trigg at worm-catching must keep on the wing all night.

Trigg's relations with his old home were beginning to make him restive. Not that he wanted to break away from them, as yet, for all the affection that was in his nature had been, and still was expended upon those four people of his at Manningham. Although he never formulated the matter to himself, what he really wanted was that they should approve all his methods, know by intuition his desires and conform to them, look at life through his eyes and not shrink from the sight, let him manage according to his will, without unfavorable comment, care supremely for the things which seemed valuable in his eyes and nothing at all for those which he might disregard. In short, with the unconscious egoism of a self-centered man, he wanted the most possible, for the least possible—love, bordering on the celestial, furnished thankfully in exchange for such rags of affection as it might be convenient for him to part with.

As love can no more thrive without nutriment than the body can live without food, or the intellect develop without culture, this position—held by more people than would be willing to admit it—becomes after a brief space untenable. Changes

begin to work slowly, or rapidly, as the case may be, and people grow apart.

Trigg was not a man given to analysis. He prided himself on being practical—on, so to speak, sticking to figures. He resented his people having what he denominated “such a lot of useless sentiment,” and often felt provoked with them for wanting him to do things he had no mind for. He was provoked with Anna now and sat in his little railed in space, with his swivel-chair tilted back, twisting a note of hers between his fingers with his heavy brows drawn together and his lower lip slightly protruded.

Once when they were little more than children Trigg and Anna went fishing together in the marsh near Manningham. There were good pools about in openings among the lily-pads and saw grass, reached by long sluices through which a boat could pass easily, if not too heavily weighted. Trigg never objected to taking the girl with him on expeditions, because, ordinarily, she could take care of herself and gave him no trouble. She could row a boat, or paddle it like an Indian, was not afraid of bugs or of eels, and could even bait her own hooks and keep quiet so that fish might get a chance to bite. Only one thing she dreaded and that was snakes. Of these

creatures, from the tiniest garter snake upward, her terror was such that, in Trigg's eyes, it amounted to folly.

It never interfered with their expeditions, however, for when Trigg chose to land on the marsh islets, or jump about from tussock to tussock, Anna would remain in the boat and paddle quietly after him. She liked that, and she liked being with Trigg.

On this particular expedition, Trigg induced Anna to get out on one of the little marsh islands and wait there while he fished a pool about fifty yards distant. The sluice by which alone the pool might be reached was shallow, and any additional weight in the boat would ground it. It was the lily season and Anna had gathered a lapful. Her isle was a tiny place, a few yards square of moist earth lifted above the surrounding lagoon. Across it lay a cypress log, stranded, and moss-grown, which Anna utilized for a seat. She arranged her flowers into a crown with which she adorned herself, and then sat tranquil, watching the changes of the marsh. The clouds floated low, in ash-white masses; their shadows followed each other across the saw grass in rhythmical waves. Once Trigg landed a fish and she watched him in great excitement, but it was

only a little one, so it seemed superfluous to call congratulations. After awhile she heard a noise, a movement and rustling among the grass, and glanced around in swift apprehension. It came again and continued, and with terror she beheld a big water moccasin crawling up from among the saw grass and heading directly for her log, where doubtless the brute was in the habit of sunning himself.

To the girl's fear-stricken eyes the creature looked as big and malevolent as a boa constrictor; she fled to the uttermost part of her island and shrieked aloud for Trigg to come and take her away; she was frightened.

Trigg, guessing the cause, made no answer and kept his back turned. A big fish was playing around his hook and he had no mind to lose it. He waited, intent on his game, and, after numberless feints and approaches, the fish took the hook and, after a spirited contest of several minutes, lay panting and flopping its tail in the bottom of the boat, the sunlight flashing on its scales and striking out color with its every movement. It was a nine-pound fish and Trigg was delighted. In the excitement of gaining his end he had forgotten his companion's call of distress and pulled back to the island very much pleased with himself.

He found Anna crouched on the extreme edge of the solid land, with her white face and frightened eyes turned toward the log whereon lay the moccasin. She was not crying, and she had called only that once. Underneath her terror lay pain produced by a dumb consciousness that Trigg had not cared whether she was frightened or not, and pride held her voiceless. She would have taken to the water to escape the snake, but that it seemed like jumping from the frying pan into the fire; the snake had come out of the water himself.

As Trigg ran the boat aground he pointed to his catch with exultation. "Isn't it a beauty?" he asked, and lifted it so that she might behold and admire.

Something in her face attracted his attention as she stepped, or rather stumbled into the boat, and he remembered to inquire why she had called him.

Anna pointed toward the moccasin. "I was frightened," she admitted, through white lips.

Trigg laughed. "You needn't have been," he said. "I was coming in a little while, only there was something I wanted to do first."

Then he jumped ashore and killed the moccasin with his fishing rod.

The incident passed speedily from the minds of both; from Anna's, because she was in the habit of supplying Trigg's deficiencies and so was more prone to judge herself than him. And from Trigg's because he never gave up practical advantages for the sake of other people's foolishness. It was silly in Anna to be afraid of snakes. Trigg had scant patience with weaknesses which threatened to thwart instead of aiding him.

He twisted Anna's note therefore and scowled over it. The home people wanted him to run over to Manningham for a few days and it did not suit him to go. True, Anna had not bidden him in so many words to come, but she had remarked on the length of time he permitted to elapse between his visits, and told him that little Ned was failing. The child had never recovered from a bad attack of fever he had had months before, she said, and while Dr. Irène assured them that there was no immediate danger, still, they could not disguise from themselves the fact that the little fellow was exceedingly delicate. The anxiety wore on Robin and he was getting thin and gray, it would wring Trigg's heart to see the change in him.

Trigg had no idea of going home. He had arranged to run on to New York on the following

day to look after some railroad combinations which threatened to interfere with their fishing interests. Certain magnets must be interviewed at once and judiciously handled so that a fair wind might be made out of that which threatened to be a foul one. Mr. Anselm did not wish to show prominently in the business himself and so it had been arranged between them that Trigg should represent him. Should he bring the matter to a successful issue the partnership with Anselm would be assured.

A visit to Manningham, at shortest, would consume four days and therefore was not to be thought of. Business must be attended to first. Still he was fond enough of his home and his people to be made uncomfortable by what Anna had written, and because of his discomfort he waxed impatient with her and mentally dubbed her inconsiderate, and a sensationalist. Ned was often ailing, indeed, since his accident, to be so was his normal condition. And Robin had been going off in his looks for years; but then Robin was getting age on him, which Anna should have remembered. Anna would like him to drop everything and dash over to Manningham every time one of the home folks had a stumped toe. If indulged, there would be no limit to her foolishness.

Trigg knew quite well that this was the first time that Anna had ever suggested his coming home without his first blazing the way. He knew also that she was a proud, truthful woman who would no more have fooled him to Manningsham for self-gratification than she would have permitted him to be criticized in her presence. But she was Anna, and Trigg chose to feel resentful. She ought not to want him to do things he had no mind for. Half impatiently, he wished she had more practical sense, more appreciation of the relations of things and of material values. If she were more like Carrie Anselm now, it would simplify matters tremendously. Carrie was a girl with knowledge and appreciation of business; she knew all about the importance of money and success. She was free of the sentiments that thrust unwelcome responsibilities upon other people.

Less than two years before Trigg had been contented with his sweetheart as she was, and had had no wish to see her made acquainted with business and business methods. Now he felt vaguely that she was behind the times, as they affected him, and that any necessity for measuring by her standards might prove irksome, not to say impossible.

He drew pen and paper toward him and replied to her note, stating briefly that he was compelled to go North on business and might be away many weeks. He was sorry Ned was poorly, he said, and that Robin should be anxious—perhaps they were over anxious. Anyway, she must give his love to them both, and take care of herself and them. Then he gave her an address to which she might write in New York.

He closed his note, paused a moment irresolutely with it in his hand, tore it open again and took from his pocket a ten dollar note. This he inclosed with the request that Anna would get something with it for his sister—anything she might require, or fancy.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### SOME BUSINESS METHODS.

TRIGG was sealing his letter a second time when a gentleman entered and inquired for Mr. Anselm. He was a spruce young fellow, junior partner of a business firm which by tacit consent was admitted to be a rival of Anselm's. The men of the two firms were polite and well affected in public, and, strangely enough, fairly cordial social acquaintances, yet in business they watched each other like hawks and held themselves always prepared to swoop down upon any straying and unguarded advantage and snatch it away, each to his own nest.

Both firms at this juncture had their eye upon the same bit of property and each was trying to circumvent the other for its acquisition. The property belonged to a woman, popularly supposed to be a widow, who had no adequate conception of its value, and who was vacillating between overtures, uncertain which to take, and indisposed to take any.

About this woman Trigg Bartram happened to know a couple of facts, which, properly handled, seemed likely to ultimate in triumph for the firm of Anselm, and solid advantage as well. So far from being a widow the property-holder possessed a husband, who had been banished the State for some misdemeanor committed during the war. From this man she had been separated many years and her feelings against him were bitter, although owing to the prejudice against divorce still lingering in parts of the South, the legal tie between the pair had never been broken. That the man was alive, Bartram knew, for he had relations in Morley with whom, from time to time, he communicated. He knew also the fellow's whereabouts and that he had provided himself with another family. The outraged wife, informed of these facts and also of her husband's inalienable dower-right in her real estate, should he chance to outlive her, might be induced to part with the property. A divorce would enable the husband to wed with her rival, retention of her real estate would constitute him in some sort her heir, with or without her consent, while sale of her property, which he could in no wise prevent, would enable her to put her money into an annuity and so leave him in the lurch altogether.

An angry woman would do it too, particularly if she were childless and had no special aptitude for business.

Bartram's first thought had been to use his knowledge for his individual behoof, but from that he had been deterred by the fact that such capital as he possessed was already invested, and he knew enough of women to feel sure that a better bargain could be driven if purchase money could be put down in cash. So, perforce, he confided in Anselm, who snapped at the scheme and applauded it. They would heat the iron at once and then strike, he said, feeling that Trigg was an unusually clever fellow and had in him the making of a financier.

To put the scheme into practice he departed at once, sure now of securing the property at his own figure, and mightily pleased, deep down below the surface. And before his going it was arranged between the men that Trigg should manage the Northern business, and a future partnership became a clearly understood thing.

The man from the rival firm had dropped in for a few minutes' chat, he said; in reality, as Trigg took for granted, to spy out the land. He was pleasant and affable, and Trigg met him half-way, seemingly as open as the day, but, in truth,

holding up so subtle and dextrous a guard that the other could find no point of vantage whatever.

They went out together, Trigg posting his letter in the box at the first corner. It happened to be opposite a beautiful residence wherein a wealthy old man lay dying. The two young fellows spoke of his case with interest and amusement. He had a dissolute son, heavily in debt, and was supposed to be dying intestate. It was a well-known fact that half a dozen men were gaging the very fluctuations of the old man's breath so as to attach his estate the instant death's claim should be settled. The matter excited comment and there were even bets as to which of the son's many creditors would follow quickest on the heels of the father's one.

When the pair separated Trigg went to dinner and afterward dressed himself and took Carrie Anselm to the opera. He had fallen into the way of paying the young lady considerable attention, with the thought to strengthen his position with her father, with whom she was queen regnant.

Other people, not knowing his motives, misunderstood them—the young lady for one, and Joe Scarth for another. In a letter to his sister about this time Scarth wrote:

“Bartram is making himself solid with Javan Anselm all around. There’s a woman coming into the case, people say, and that woman is Anselm’s only daughter. She’s a pretty little society filly, and always about the best groomed of them all. She’ll have a cold million, too, which is a figure not to be sneezed at. Trigg’s head is level—and he’s got eye teeth all around, whether he was born with ’em or not. I’d like to be in his shoes, if rumor speaks true. I wonder if he’s told the Manningham folks yet, or whether the affair hasn’t progressed far enough? Tip dear old Hunter the wink, *sub rosa*, will you? He loves a chuckle, does Robin, and here’s a chance of a good one at his boy’s expense. Trigg is a dandy on a deal, I tell you.”

Mary Scarth adopted her brother’s suggestion, only instead of telling Hunter she took Anna into her confidence, enjoining profoundest secrecy, and giving the rumor as though it were fully authenticated fact.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### SEPARATION.

CAN anyone tell when disillusionment commences? Do we ever track back the thing to its germ. No, verily. For, like life itself, disillusionment is growth, shifting, development; it is getting into new positions, obtaining new views. Most often the awakening comes naturally, as from sleep, but sometimes it comes with pain, sharp and sudden, as the lifting of a veil from sight with the point of a surgeon's knife.

But in all cases the subject is ripe for the dispelling touch before the touch comes. In the hidden recesses, apart almost from consciousness, changes have been wrought silently, subtly, and that which seems revelation is but the climax of preparation.

At first this is only dimly perceived. When the bandage is removed objects look blurred, surroundings take on unfamiliar aspects, and the horizon is confused. We strive and cry, stumbling painfully among hard facts and trying to

force them aside with hands that bleed. We say that we cannot endure—that we will not; and all the while we know that we must.

For months Anna had felt, rather than seen, that matters were not as they should be between Trigg and herself. His not finding time to come to them even for a day during Ned's illness had been a surprise to her—more, it had been a shock. She knew that he had been made fully aware of the little boy's danger because, although she had been too closely occupied herself to write much, Hunter had written, and several times, at their request, Dr. Irène had telegraphed. His setting aside his promise of coming at Christmas also had wounded her sorely. The fear that Trigg might be drifting away from his old ties obtruded itself. This fear she fought gallantly, treating it as a disloyalty, and, most unjustly, arraigning herself at the bar of her love on an indictment for suspicion and exaction. As the child still continued ailing and miserable, and the lines in her brother's face deepened, accentuating the expression of age and sadness that had come to it, she wrote to Trigg, setting these things plainly before him, hoping that he would see the thing as she saw it. When his note came in reply, giving business still the preference, the

point of the optician's knife, so to speak, touched her eyes.

Love bandaged them, however, and she took to making excuses for Trigg, which is a pitiful resort for any woman with the man whom she loves. He was busy, she told herself, his life was so full of plans and excitement—his seeming negligence arose not from lack of love for them all but rather from business absorption. Then for awhile she deluded herself with the old belief that this very absorption had its foundation in love. Trigg wanted to make money so that he might release Manningham; so that he might lift some of the burden from shoulders which had bowed gallantly to an extra strain for him. Trigg's way of showing love was not her way, nor the way of her people; she was beginning, at last, to recognize differences which were elemental; but she was incapable, all at once, of setting material values ahead of those which, to her, seemed more worthy. That money could be striven for as an end, not a means, was a lesson that had never been taught her.

As time went on, however, and from all quarters came tidings of Trigg's success and Trigg's prospects, more, when he wrote cheerfully himself and spoke as though his future were assured,

and yet made no movement to lift Hunter's burden, with so much as a finger, she was forced to abandon that position also.

She fought the field all the way, falling back inch by inch, foot by foot; holding a position desperately until forced by circumstances to find it untenable. And all the while she suffered as a proud woman must suffer who divines, but will not acknowledge, that all along she has given more love than she has received. A love has need to be purged of all selfhood before it will willingly accept the celestial position; human love cries out for an equivalent.

It was hard on Anna because the only equivalent Trigg could bring her—or indeed would ever care to bring her—was worldly success, and for worldly success when simply demonstrated by dollars Anna cared not a button. It was hard on Trigg too. Through no intention, or, indeed, seeking of his own, he had been invested with a giant's robe whose folds he was inadequate to fill, or wear gracefully. He lived out the law of his individual being as absolutely as she lived out the law of hers, and as the laws were diverse their operation caused an inevitable sundering of life and interest. The brook on either side of which they had journeyed, with hands clasped

across, had widened and was widening. The man recognized it first, with impatience and semi-conscious resentment that she had not earlier crossed over to his side. The woman came to it more slowly, and with bitterer pain, because of her womanhood, and of the love in her heart that lived on.

When the news of Trigg's attentions to Javan Anselm's daughter first began to circulate she attached no special importance to them, setting the story down to Joe Scarth's gossip, and his sister's exaggeration. But the constant repetition of the thing annoyed her and increased the soreness and resentment which Trigg's own conduct had engendered. The idea of the girl's money haunted her and suggested other ideas that were loathsome to her, and from which she shrank with furious self-upbraiding.

Having been raised together, her relations with her lover admitted of more verbal latitude than usually seems possible, so after troubling over the matter for awhile Anna wrote frankly to Trigg, asking him gently, but proudly, whether or not the old love had failed. She made no allusion whatever to external evidence of his growing indifference, but said that she felt that things between them had drifted into an

unsatisfactory state, and she offered him his release.

Trigg, misunderstanding her motives and angered by her action, retorted sharply that she "might do as she liked," but that if she "threw him over" he would also hold himself exonerated from any promises he might have made her relative to Manningham.

Whereupon Anna, quivering with pain over what seemed to her the sordidness of the retaliation, promptly returned him his ring and broke the engagement.

## CHAPTER XX.

### A SPECTER OF THE DEAD YEARS.

TRIGG BARTRAM sat alone in the little railed in space in the office of Anselm & Bartram. The senior partner was out, attending a board meeting of a bank of which he was president, so Trigg had the place to himself. The desks of the clerks and stenographers employed by the firm were in an outer room. Anselm preferred the old quarters and the junior partner made no objection either at the time of entering the firm or afterward, so that office arrangements remained the same.

Trigg sat with his swivel-chair tilted and one leg crossed over the other. He looked prosperous, but both face and figure had changed since that afternoon seven years before when he had stood in his boat beside the lumber wharf of the Manningham swamp, as it was called, and girded so fiercely at fate, life, and circumstance because the combinations theretofore had given him nothing but poverty. The old athletic grace which

had belonged to the days of hunting-shirt and corduroys was gone; his figure was heavier, his movements less impetuous. He looked older than his years warranted, his hair was threaded with gray at the temples and there were tell-tale lines about the mouth and eyes. The old brooding suspicion of the eyes themselves was intensified into a resident watchfulness, and the vertical wrinkles between the brows, caused by the habit of drawing them together, were more than ever apparent. A hard face, men called it, despite its fine coloring—a handsome face, women said, but unusually stern; and for children, they rarely looked at it twice.

Seven years of plenty these had been, following on more than thrice seven years of leanness. He had lived at high pressure, an energetic, successful, dominating man, forging ahead under full steam, taking right of way in clear places, forcing a track for himself where the stream was encumbered with other craft. Excitement and high pressure all the time, and a slight acceleration of the pace since his marriage, which had taken place six months after Anna Hunter had given him his *congé*. He had no children, and his wife, pretty, well-groomed Carrie Anselm, had developed a chronic invalidism which necessitated her

spending many months of each year at German Spas. He usually took her across and sometimes went for her, but the life at Carlsbad and other places she affected was irksome to him. He missed the excitement of business, of speculation, and the exhilaration of successful financial *coups d'état*. Heart and soul he was devoted to money-getting—or, more accurately, brain and brawn.


Trigg sat in his chair with relaxed muscles, and a general giving way all over; his head ached and he put his hand to it from time to time; the hand itself was not quite so steady as usual. He had been under the weather for several months past, but would not admit it even to himself. Within the last fortnight a speculation had failed, and he had made a blunder or two in calculation which a year ago would have been impossible. Anselm had looked him over sharply, suggested that his liver might be disordered, and advised him to put himself under treatment.

It was due to his physical condition, perhaps, that his thoughts kept reverting to old times and to Manningham, as he sat in the empty office with the monotonous sound of the "ticker" on his desk punctuating the silence. If, as scientists claim, the entire man changes every seven years, it was another Trigg Bartram who sat there—a

different man altogether from the stalwart young mutineer of the swamp.

There had been changes at Manningham during the past five years, Trigg knew. He kept up a desultory intercourse with his people, confined mostly to letters exchanged with his brother-in-law. Since his marriage he had never written to Anna. Yes, there had been changes. Little Ned had entered into rest, slipping away from his maimed, aching habitation of bone, muscle, and flesh into that beyond said to hold surcease of misery and tears. The little fellow's release had come during Trigg's first absence abroad with his wife. The telegrams and letters had been forwarded to him. He recalled how cut up he had felt about the child and how futilely he had wished that he had oftener remembered to spend money for the boy's pleasure.


He had as yet done nothing overt about the Manningham mortgage, although when he had threatened Anna with a relinquishment of his ultimate purpose to pay it off, he had in reality no intention of putting his words into effect. He had simply so written because he was angry with her, and also because such an argument would have had weight with him. He still intended to pay off the mortgage, provided, of



course, Robin should desire to hold on to Manningham now that there was no heir to the name. Manningham was good property though, and after awhile, when he could see his way to withdrawing that much capital from his business, the mortgage should be lifted. Meanwhile Robin contrived to keep down the interest himself.

Half-yearly, for his own pleasure, or as quit-rent to his conscience, Trigg forwarded his brother-in-law a check with the request that the sum, whatever it might be, should be used for providing some extra comfort or pleasure for his sister. That it would, undeviatingly, be used as he directed he felt confident, knowing Robin and trusting him. To these gifts Hunter never objected, honoring Trigg's love for his sister and recognizing his right to minister to her if so inclined. Mrs. Hunter continued physically robust, but her case otherwise was quite hopeless.

Anna Hunter was still unmarried. Trigg knew that also. And when he thought of the matter, other than abstractly, such a course on her part seemed in order, and the natural sequence. Anna was a true woman—a woman of ideals. He had found them tormenting once and so, impatiently, had turned his back on them; but none the less did they serve to halo his old



sweetheart in his thoughts and set her apart from, and above the balance of her sex. Anna had loved him, and Anna was true. With that charm he conjured—by that light he beheld her continued celibacy as a beautiful and justifiable tribute. For he had loved her in his way—loved her a great deal better than he had ever loved the woman who bore his name and pillowed her head upon his breast.

Men are a great deal more constant to an ideal than they ever are to an individual, and Anna Hunter's unworldliness, while it had been a rock of stumbling when it lay in Trigg's path, now that it had been rolled aside formed a pedestal on which she stood forever uplifted in his mind. It is never the practical woman—the woman with “no nonsense about her”—who gets and retains the strongest hold upon men.

Trigg fell to wondering about his old sweetheart—whether she had changed much and how. She was six months his senior he knew, and therefore past thirty. He wondered also how Robin looked, and whether the old home had appreciably gone down since he saw it last. Seven years was a long time, and it seemed impossible that much could have been done to hold in check the ravages of decay.

Some day he would go back to Manningham. Robin would be glad to see him—Anna also, perhaps. A few weeks of the old life would set him up again. He had strange shooting pains in his head at times which robbed him of sleep. Then he took morphine, to quiet it, and that did not seem to help matters much. Anselm, who was nearing sixty, talked about his liver, but Trigg knew well enough that a man but little more than half that age had no business knowing, save abstractly, that he possessed such an organ. He, himself, thought that he might be a bit overworked; he had been a good deal pushed of late, and things had gone wrong. He had overheard a man on 'Change remark the day before that "Bartram was losing his nerve." That was a lie. His nerve was as good as it ever had been.

The afternoon waned; the people in the outer room closed their desks and machines and departed, leaving only the call-boy, who had his lair somewhere in the house. Business hours were over, but Bartram kept his seat. The board meeting must be over long ago, but Anselm had not come in and there were matters which the partners must talk over before the office could be closed. The day had been somber, a muggy, gray day, with clouds, but no rain; the light

faded early. Bartram pressed the button beside his desk and turned on the electric current. The incandescent lights, through colored glass, gave a subdued brilliancy to the room.

Bartram leaned back in his chair again and suffered his eyes to fasten themselves upon the opposite wall. It was painted a soft ashes of roses color, with a harmonizing dado and frieze. Nothing there to excite the imagination, not even a picture.

A strange thing happened. Before the eyes of the gazing man the wall appeared to waver as though a breeze rocked it, and to recede farther and farther until it took its place as a gray and lowering horizon in a dim distance. Trees appeared, hemlock, cypress, and juniper; with live oaks and magnolias intermingled, and many of them knee deep in water that flowed slowly, in a still brown tide, shadowed by the lowering sky and interlocking branches into Plutonian darkness. A long tortuous canal wound inward, through marsh weeds and saw grass at first, and later on through the timber. Cypress knees, distorted and repulsive, jutted up through the water and formed resting places for mud-turtles and water lizards. Frogs croaked in a droning monotone. Moss depended from the branches over-

head and hung straight, in a breezeless atmosphere. Under the fallen logs and amid the coarse grass of the tussocks rattlesnakes and water moccasins coiled; and up above, among the moss and tangles of creepers, little green tree snakes wriggled and twisted, occasionally letting themselves dangle and drop to the ooze below with a swift flash of color and sinuous movement. Raccoons and opossums scuttled about, climbing and descending the trees, and in the shallows and still places of the lagoon water fowl were congregated.

The canal widened into a tarn, dark, motionless, and begirt with a jungly wall. In the midst of the water a low island lifted itself, moist, brown and rugged, like the back of a giant alligator left bare by an ebb tide. On it a house stood—a camp with outlying sheds, like a squatter's cabin. Toward the island a boat pulled, cutting the dark water in straight clean lengths as the rower bent to his oars.

The scene shifted—night, darkness, and tempest, filled and lashed through the swamp. Trees bent and broke, crashing before the wind; thunder reverberated, and lightning leaped earthward in bolts of fire. From the cabin a man rushed, into the storm wrack, wild-eyed and pal-

lid with horror from that which the tempest had shown him.

Again the scene shifted—on the water shown moonlight; the tarn was ashen through its quivering darkness. The sentinel trees mustered close, like grim knights in their armor. On the lake were two boats—one at rest, and the other in motion. In the first boat a figure uplifted itself, dark and stalwart. In its arms it held an inert mass, long, and sharply defined; this it heaved upward by main strength and cast down in the water, which yielded to displacement with mutinous tumult.

In less than a moment an empty boat rocked on the eddying circles; and another boat sped through the water and drew alongside it.

Slowly the scene faded away, resolving into the blankness of space. Trigg roused himself, shivering as from a chill wind, and swaying in his chair as marsh grasses sway when a strong tide is running. He put his hand to his forehead and found it clammy moist and icy as marble. All the blood seemed drained out from his body so white and strained was his face. There were pains in his head, seeming to shoot upward from the spinal cord into the brain. His lips were

parted and dry; for an instant his eyes had a curious, hunted expression; he turned his head from side to side in a furtive, hesitant manner, like an animal seeking some means of escape from a threatening danger.

In a moment it passed. Trigg pulled himself together sharply, rose and stamped about the room, moving his arms and shoulders as though just aroused from sleep. He was not a superstitious man; he prided himself on being practical and hard headed. But this was the third time within a month that this dream, or vision, had come to him. Portentous it might be, and that of something seriously wrong with his physical man. His circulation or digestion must be mightily amiss; he had heard often that a disordered liver was more potent to create hallucinations and raise specters than all the Magi of Egypt.

Anselm was right, perhaps, about his requiring treatment. He would have himself overhauled by the best talent in the city. And he would stop letting his mind dwell on old days and by-gone happenings while he was out of condition.

While he argued with himself, Anselm came in,

full of business, which the two men discussed for an hour and more. Trigg's mind worked with unusual celerity, never had his perception been more alert, his deductions more logical and astute. Anselm felt moved to compliment him upon his ability that night.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### OLD JOHN REENY.

THE passage of seven years had made little appreciable difference in the appearance of Manningham. The weather tones on the outer walls had deepened, more stucco had peeled from the pillars of the veranda, the mantling of ivy and vines was heavier, the trees on the lawn seemed taller and more umbrageous—that was all. The interior also looked pretty much the same, with only the pitiful difference that there were no longer signs about of a child's occupancy. Little Ned's wagon, which had formerly stood in the hall when not in use, was now stowed away in a deep closet in his father's room, with his toys, his books, and his worn little clothing. It had been Hunter's own arrangement and Anna had acquiesced in it, understanding the rare constancy of a nature which even held sacred all the inanimate relics of its broken happiness.

"Your brother is a marvel to me," Irène said more than once. "For a man strained as he has

been to keep so cheery and be so helpful and sympathetic makes me reverent of manhood. He's solid stuff all through—fine in the grain, and pretty well all heart. It's men like Robin who prop up our credit through the ages."

Anna smiled with her eyes.

"Is masculine credit so shaky?" she mocked, with a touch of her old fun. "I thought it was like the everlasting hills, immovable, and mightily exalted. You talk like it was a wind-shaken sapling."

Irène smiled in his turn.

"'Tis sometimes," he affirmed. "I'll admit it once in a while myself, if you'll promise not to take unlawful advantage. Should you try, *esprit de corps* would compel me to pounce on you with instant and sulky denials. All the same, Robin is a *rara avis*. If I were sure that the outcome would be men armed like unto himself I'd advocate his being sown like dragon teeth."

A wistful expression stole into Anna's eyes. "Poor brother," she said, "life wears on him heavily in spite of his cheeriness. I'm glad you persuaded him to keep Salome for you. The horse is a pleasure as well as a help to him."

The increased expense entailed by Mrs. Hunter's affliction had necessitated her husband's

giving up his riding horse years before. The plantation was tenanted out, and the fuel was supplied by contract, so that the keeping of horses was not a necessity. Morley was within easy walking distance, and many of the neighbors could be reached by water; boats do not eat their heads off like horses, and so it had come to pass that the inhabitants of Manningham depended on their own arms and legs for modes of progression. Whether from increase of age, or the never ending reflex action of bad surgery, Hunter's wounds had of late been more than usually troublesome to him. They had always caused him uneasiness, but never before, since their healing, the annoyance and suffering which at times, now, threatened to lay him by the heels altogether. He found it impossible to walk to his classes and was just turning about in his mind what he should do when Dr. Irène, whose eyes seldom wandered far enough from Manningham to be blinded to its changes, put himself in the breach by discovering that his health required horseback exercise entirely, and that Salome's age made her stiff under the saddle. He bought another horse therefore, a young Kentucky thoroughbred, and sent the black mare over to Manningham with the request that Hunter would

winter her for him. As a natural sequence the buggy had been sent over likewise. Salome must have exercise and it would be quite an easy matter for Anna to drive her brother to and from his classes in good weather. It would make a pleasant break in her monotonous life. And on bad days Shandy could take her place, or Hunter could drive himself.

The speciousness of all these arguments amused Hunter immensely. He saw through them all, straight to the motive behind them. He knew that Irène's friendship for himself was as big and faithful as can be the friendship of men; but he knew also that the doctor's omnipresent care for them all went to fill a larger bill than friendship. That it had its root in, and drew its sustenance from *love*. He let the doctor manage the case in his own way, never blocking his course with false pride about trifles, or ungenerous repulse of obligation. Hunter had a true man's tender, genuine reverence for all genuine and tender emotion. He wondered often whether his sister could be blind to that which was so patent to him; whether the love which surrounded her like sunshine would never be potent to warm and cherish into life and growth a new affection.

He knew that she had loved Trigg with all the strength that was in her, and that the Hunters were a conservative race, constant, and slow of change. He knew also that Anna was now fully persuaded that Trigg's love for herself had been about on a par with his love for the rest of them—a movable feast, capable of being thrust forward, or backward, according to the exigencies of worldly advantage.

The brother and sister rarely talked of Trigg now; he had, as it were, drifted out of their lives. Neither did they shun the subject; when his name came up naturally it was spoken with kindness and a loyal recognition of the fact that such as he was, he, in a measure, belonged to them. They loved him too, Hunter because everything appertaining to his wife had a claim on his tenderness, because he had raised the boy almost as his son, and because Trigg had always remembered his sister. And Anna, because she was a woman who changed slowly, because he was Trigg and she—herself.

Whatever might be their inward convictions, they never overtly judged Trigg, those two. They were not given to criticism or harshness.

Still, Anna Hunter was no fool, and no weakling, and contrasts would come and force them-

selves upon her cognizance. As, for instance, when Irène sent over Salome to spare Robin's crippled legs, cunningly pretending the while that the mare's own legs lacked suppleness and that she must be relegated forever to harness.

Anna knew quite well that Irène loved her. Women divine these things intuitively, and added to that the doctor had left her in no sort of doubt about the matter. The child's illness and death had brought about considerable intimacy in their friendship; and after little Ned was taken, he had spoken out, pleading his cause with all the passion and fire of which he was capable. Anna had put him off then, telling him frankly that the sort of love he wanted and deserved was not in her heart for him, and that she would shame to bring him that which she knew he would scorn to accept, true friendship and honest admiration in exchange for heart's love.

Then Irène, who never admitted himself beaten, and consequently never remained so, had coaxed from her a promise that she would try to love him, and that, should she succeed, she would tell him so. For many a day the matter stood thus, Anna yearning to give the good man his due, yet held back by her own honesty. It was not that she consciously loved Trigg with the old

love—Trigg had forgotten her, had supplanted her with another woman—that which gave her pause was the knowledge that she loved Irène himself with no new love, that while her feeling for him was perceptibly broader and deeper than formerly it was simply an evolution of the old liking, the old trust. Unconsciously she wanted to love this other man with the sort of love she had lavished on Trigg, never recognizing that the real point of difference was that in the one case she had been principal donor, while in the other she would be equal beneficiary as well.

With all their patter about equality women have really no true conception of what the thing is. They have a natural proclivity for one-sided growth.

Anna stood in the spring sunshine and superintended Shandy as he worked among the flowers, helping him with the lighter parts of the job, the seed-sowing, and trimming off recalcitrant branches. She had developed into a noble looking woman, and that which she had lost with the passing of girlhood was more than made up in the dignity and fineness of expression which a life such as hers had been potent to produce. In looking at her there could be no sense of deficit.

Shandy had shot upward, after his kind, into a

shambling hobbledehoy with enormous feet and hands, and a long, thin neck on which his bullet head was set like a black-heart cherry on its stem. He combined the functions of gardener and hostler, and discharged the duties pertaining to both after an inconsequent and witless fashion which made supervision necessary. He enjoyed many privileges, owing to his enduring love for Ned, and the fact that he had been brought up, so to speak, in the house. As he lazily dug and raked, or leaned on the handle of the implements to ease his long back, Shandy conversed.

"Miss Anna," he queried. "You-all bin hear how low dat po' white man is over yonder at de swamp. De doctor come by here dis mornin', by times, gwine home arter sumthin'. I opened de gate for him an' axed de news an' he 'lowed de man didn't have no time to live hardly. Doctor was down dar all night. Arter awhile he went back."

"Who is it?" Anna questioned in her turn, twisting a shoot of a flourishing La France rose sideways to secure it to its stake. "Lots of people live about the swamp. Do I know the man?"

"Yes'm," Shandy replied glibly. "Anyhow, Mars Robin do—same thing. It's ole John Reeny whar sick. 'Spec' swamp gin done bu'n

clean thro' him—dat what I 'spec. He been suckin' it in, like one ole mud turtle suck mud, ever sence befo' I was born. He gwine die dis time do, an' nothin' kyarn't sabe him. I gwine over dar arter I git done in de garden."

"Who's with him? Who takes care of him?" Anna asked, pausing in her work. She remembered to have heard Irène speak of the old squatter over in the swamp hollow, on Colonel Sturgeon's lands. The man had French blood, she had been told, and an Irish wife. There had been an idiot son too, and a lot of other children who had died of that bad fever which had undermined what constitution poor little Ned had left. She recollected all about them now, although she had not heard them mentioned for a great while. She repeated her question with interest, supplementing it with the additional query whether the man's wife were living.

"Lord, now Miss Anna," reproved Shandy. "You done forgot dat? Dat 'ooman been daid better'n three ye'r. She die 'long erbout de same time our Ned went to heaven, she did. Mighty servidgerous 'ooman she was whenst she war 'bout'n half drunk. She was sorter cunjer-'ooman too—used to sell folks charms to physic dar critters. Me an' mammy went over dar in

de night once to git er charm fur ole Blossum, mammy's no-hornded cow what we-all 'lowed 'nother nigger had cunjered. White cunjer kin break down black cunjer ev'ry time. Dat how cum mammy took out to Reeny's 'bout'n ole Bloss."

"Did the children all die that time with the fever? I thought the eldest son—the idiot one—was still living. Who takes care of the old man?"

"He take keer o' hisse'f, he do," Shandy replied. "Dat is, he been doin' it plumb 'twell now. Sence he been so bad off, Unk Wyatt Sturgeon, one cullerd man, stays wid him. Dr. Irène son't him dar an' pays him fur stayin'. No'm, dem chil'en didn't all die. 'Twarn't none but de little ones tooken. Drake, he de bigges' one, ain't been live 'long o' his daddy sence befo' de fever. He stays in de swamp *all* de time—same as runaway black folks use to befo' slavery 'gin out. Drake, he stay on Manitou Island 'long o' de rattlesnakes an' de Injun harn'ts."

Anna was about to put more questions when her attention was diverted by hearing a gate slam, and glancing across the intervening shrubberies she beheld Salome circling around the drive to the bridge over the ha-ha, at a swift trot. She

could not see who held the reins because of the sides of the buggy, but the horse was going at speed and an indefinable anxiety swooped down upon Anna. Her thoughts flew instantly to her brother and she decided that something must have happened to him. Robin had driven himself into Morley that morning, and when that was the case his custom was to keep Salome in town. A return so early as this was unprecedented.

Dropping her rose shears and cord, Anna hastened toward the house, forgetful alike of the dying squatter and her own recent interest in him.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### AS A BEAST TO HIS LAIR.

IN the hall her brother met her, thereby allaying at once her keenest anxiety. Hunter looked worried and preoccupied, and his face showed the gray aged look which trouble always brought to it. Anna perceived instantly that something must be terribly amiss.

"Is it Mabel?" she questioned, going straight to him.

"No. Trigg."

Hunter put a telegram in her hand, and while she read it, hurried on to his room.

The message was brief, but to the woman it seemed ominous, as it had seemed to her brother. It was from Javan Anselm and read: "Bartram is ill. Pretty serious case. Come at once. Consultation necessary." It was the last phrase which frightened her—not of death for Trigg, she never thought of death, nor of a consultation of physicians. She followed her brother with the blood ebbing away from her face at every step she took. Hunter was packing a valise with hur-

ried, but dextrous hands. The train he wished to take left Morley in half an hour, but he had been obliged to bring his sister the tidings himself. It had seemed better that he should, and by hurrying he could catch the train well enough. Salome made good time still.

Anna held out the telegram with her finger on the last two words.

"What does it mean?" she questioned, looking straight into his eyes with a great fear in hers. "They want to consult with *you*. Do you think —*that*?"

"Yes," he answered huskily, and shifted his glance.

She said not another word, but helped him with his few preparations. Then she went to her own room and got what money she had and gave it to him. Hunter took it without a protest. They were at one in this matter. Each knew the other's underlying thought and between them there was no need for speech.

With strange irrelevancy, which held a stranger consistency, Hunter's memory kept playing around an incident of his own past life. He saw himself again in the hastily improvised hospital of an army post, maimed and shattered, with the prospect before him of being a cripple for life.

He saw a kindly matron and a fair young girl who had risked discomfort, fatigue, danger itself to come to him. He felt again the girl's soft, sweet kisses on brow and lips, and heard her true voice saying, in reply to his own offer to release her from her engagement to a broken and disabled man, "Robin, if there was only enough left of you to say 'yes' to the preacher's questions I would marry *that*."

He had never told the incident to anyone, not even to his sister. There are things in life too sacred to be touched save by a man's own soul.

As they went out together to the buggy Hunter asked Anna if he should send anybody from the village to stay with her. Mary Scarth would come, perhaps, or one of the other girls. He could scribble a line on his knee as they drove in town, and Shandy could deliver it and bring the young lady out in the buggy. Shandy must go with him to bring Salome back.

But Anna shrank from the proposition, feeling that the chatter of an outside woman would drive her wild. Aunt Ceres would stay in the house with her at night, she said, and she was used to being a good deal alone in the day. Hunter did not press the point, knowing that for some natures silence and solitude lighten suspense. His

sister was no longer a girl to be shielded and chaperoned. She could decide all things for herself.

After her brother's departure Anna thrust thought aside and went her household ways, making her arrangements with Aunt Ceres, and deciding on various matters Robin had left in her charge. A fellow professor would take his classes, but she must look after the tenants and see that Shandy gave Salome proper tendance. Robin might be away many days. Once she paused and inclined her head as though listening; the breeze brought to her the sound of the railway whistle. That would be the train which took Hunter cityward. The woman wrung her hands together and winged a voiceless prayer after it.

Later in the afternoon, obeying an impulse, how generated she knew not, but very insistent, she went to Trigg's room and put it in order, with fresh sheets on the bed, clean towels on the rack, and the ewer brimmed with water as though in preparation for an expected guest. She opened the windows also and let the sweet perfumed spring air into the room. Near one of the windows grew an old Banksia rose. It was in full bloom and Trigg had used to like the creamy

blossoms. She leaned out and broke clusters of buds and flowers and filled with them an old Satsuma vase on his desk.

When twilight descended, enfolding the earth in its carmelite mantle, Anna went out on the veranda and sat herself down on the steps in almost the identical spot Trigg had occupied that other spring night seven years before. Old Rollicker, little Ned's big Newfoundland, a dog well gone in years, scant of tooth and gray of muzzle, came and stretched himself beside her, thrusting his great head into her lap and blinking lovingly up with his bleared eyes. Anna stroked his broad forehead and twisted his silky ears and the curls of his ruff absently between her fingers. The air was languorous with the breath of honeysuckle, for the hedgerows through the country were all a-bloom. The moon had not risen, and into the music of living had come the soft movement of twilight.

Anna sat motionless gazing out into the night, trying not to think, trying not to let memory drag out and unfold the old days when she and Trigg Bartram had been children together—boy and girl together, and those later days which had meant so much to *her*; those days before Trigg had yielded up his nature to the cankerous greed

of gold which had eaten away his love for them as a turbid flood eats away land, absorbing tract after tract into its insatiable maw.

It was no use. Thought bid defiance to control, slipped its leash and circled thither and yon, like a trailing hound, doubling, twisting amid incidents and events, yet pressing steadily onward along the track which connected the past with the present. The evening waxed, moving on toward the turn of midnight, like a full wave. The moon swiftly rose from behind curtaining tree tops, passed through entanglements of clouds and so won free to pure ether. The sleeping earth lay half revealed in a coy witchery of light and shadow. Now and again the shrilling of a steam whistle cleft the silence in twain, dominating stridently, for a brief instant, the soft sounds of the night. the jarring of insects close at hand, and the croaking of frogs away in the lagoon. Night trains were passing, bearing men to their homes, or abroad on their business. Aunt Ceres came in, still redolent of her after supper pipe, and went heavily upstairs, where she would spend the night in the small room next to Anna's. She was a stout woman and getting into years. Anna required her presence more for the comfort of having living humanity within call

than for any active good Aunt Ceres could do her.

The tall clock in the hall struck eleven, and a smaller one in Hunter's room repeated the strokes like an echo. Anna pushed the dog aside and rose, sucking in her breath and giving it forth again in an impatient sigh. It would be hours yet before news could come to her, and waiting is weary. The old dog, disturbed by her movement, rose likewise, and stretched himself, curving his back downward and rasping his claws against the floor. In an instant he stiffened up again, set his ruff a-prick, and growled, the absence of light kindly concealing the harmlessness of his denuded jaws. A sound broke the stillness, as of a closing gate. The entrance gate to the lawn had a trick of slamming if unwarily managed, and Anna opined that Shandy had slipped over to the village and was now coming home. The boy occupied a room behind the kitchen, which, after the Southern custom, was in a building detached from the house.

The road circled round, but there was a foot-path across the grass and a plank over the ha-ha, giving a short cut to the house for pedestrians. As Anna looked a man came out from the shadow of the magnolias, crossed the foot bridge, and

advanced directly toward the front door. Rollicker met him belligerently, but, at a word and a gesture, changed his tactics and stood aside. Anna's heart began to beat suffocatingly. As the figure neared, the swing of the walk was familiar; so was the height and general air and appearance. She recognized Trigg Bartram before the moonlight showed her his face.

Trigg looked at her and smiled, but he made no gesture of greeting. His air was that of one who had never been away, who had separated from her not an hour since. Anna, held spell-bound by she knew not what, watched him, making herself no sign. Trigg seated himself on the steps and bared his head to the moonlight. In a moment he glanced up at her. "Sit down, Anna," he said, and pointed to the place beside him.

Anna's brain was in a whirl, but she perceived instantly that from some cause the happenings of the later years were momentarily blotted out. For the instant, Trigg was back in the past. How he had escaped from the city, eluding his nurses—or keepers—and gotten himself to Morley she did not think, did not even wonder. He *had* eluded them, he was here; returning to his old home, perhaps, in his trouble, as an animal will return to his lair. A great pity for him

surged through her, a great terror of him scalded her. She was practically alone with him and he was—he might be—she shrank away from the thought.

“Sit down,” said Trigg again. His voice had the old domineering ring; but his eyes glittered strangely.

Anna seated herself on the top step a little distance from him. Her thoughts flew to Irène as a bird to its nest. If Irène knew he would come to her, he would help her. If only he could know her peril; if only he could be at her side!

Without looking up Trigg slipped himself along the lower step until his shoulder touched her knee.

“Are you angry, Anna?” he questioned. “You are such a fool about snakes! I’ve got no patience with you. The brute did you no harm, and I was coming presently. It’s silly to be scared at nothing.”

She humored him, replying mechanically, and in her own words of long ago. “I’m not angry, Trigg. But I *was* frightened, and it was horrid of you not to care. It hurt me!”

“Pshaw!”

His own retort of the past. It sounded awful to her in this repetition. He shifted his position

again and leaned heavily against her, resting his head on her arm. The moonlight showed his face white as marble in contrast to the blackness of his hair and mustache. To the woman looking down on it, it seemed pitiful somehow, and old.

"My head aches, Anna," he said. "My brain burns. Put your hands on it—your cool, soft hands. It's blazing inside, like a swamp fire. Put it out! put it out with your hands!"

He shivered through his strong frame, and his eyes glowed, as though his wild words might be verity.

For an instant natural human terror—terror of brute force, of hideous menacing danger, overpowered the woman. A wild impulse to thrust him away, to spring to her feet, to fly into the house and up to the room where Aunt Ceres lay sleeping, to put heavy portals, bolted and barred, between them almost mastered her. Then she remembered that he was Trigg, and, dominated by the old habit, she thrust herself and her terror aside and set herself to care for him. Guided by pity and instinct she stroked his brow and his hair with her hands, with slow, soothing mesmeric movements, seeking to quiet him and hold him so until she could formulate some plan of action.

On some commonplace, practical plea, such as would not arouse his suspicions, she must coax him into the house and occupy him with trivialities until she could contrive to dispatch a messenger for Dr. Irène. Salome stood in the stable, and Shandy was, doubtless, asleep in his room. Her mother-wit must be depended on to help her to make the necessary combination.

"Trigg," she said presently, speaking gently, in the old way. "I reckon your head aches because you are tired and hungry. Mine always aches when I've had a hard day. Don't you remember when we were children how we used to make parties by ourselves in the dining room after a day's fishing? Let's make a party now. I've got lots of good things put away—things that you love, cold chicken, and cream and strawberries that I preserved myself. You know how you love them, all smothered in cream. Aunt Ceres has cake in the corner cupboard too, and fresh ham in the pantry. Come, let's make a foray like we used to."

Trigg roused himself, rose, and suffered her to lead him in. She could not guess what was working in his mind, but she kept her hand on his arm and talked to him, in the old way. With

action, her courage rose, and the emergency seemed less desperate.

In the dining room she seated Trigg in the big leather chair Hunter usually occupied, and spread a napkin on the table in front of him. Then she flitted about from pantry to cupboard, fetching all the homely dainties she had named and more besides. She took the precaution to slice the ham and fowl herself before serving it, and left all cutting implements in the pantry save a couple of silver knives, which she considered moderately safe. She would gladly have reduced him to eating with his fingers, but feared to arouse his suspicions, and after all, there were weapons of offense for such as he in every place except a padded cell.

"Now for the cream," she said gayly, when her arrangements were complete. "That's what you always want, and I've got to run out to the dairy and rob Aunt Ceres's milk-pans, as usual. Don't wait for me, Trigg. I won't be a minute."

She caught up a small silver pitcher and a cream ladle, and quitted the room, leaving the door open behind her. Her footsteps fell regularly until she reached the back porch and had the door closed, then she sprang forward like a hunted deer, sped to the kitchen and through it

to the room beyond occupied by the negro boy. The moonlight showed him to her, lying in his shirt and trousers, but barefooted and with the blanket pulled over his head. Anna caught him by his shoulders and shook him awake; then, before he could put his surprise and dismay into words she had him on his feet and half way to the door. He must saddle Salome at once and ride swiftly for Dr. Irène; he must steal the horse out the back way and ride as he had ridden for her once before—not an instant must be lost. Then she half-whispered a word or two which made the boy ejaculate "God A'mighty!" and before he could think of a question, much less ask one, she was away to the dairy, where she filled her pitcher with cream and then returned to the house.

As she stepped up on the porch again she glanced over her shoulder and had the unspeakable comfort of beholding her messenger slip, like a black snake, from the kitchen door and around into the shadow on his way to the stable.

Inside she found Trigg wandering about the room restlessly. The library door was open, showing that he had been in there; so was the door of Hunter's room away down the passage. He faced her, as she entered, with lowering eyes.

"Where's Mabel?" he demanded. "Where's the boy? I can't find them, and Robin isn't in his room. What have you done with them all?"

Anna looked him squarely in the eyes, moving toward him and the table at the same time. She had lighted a lamp when they first came in and Trigg had turned it to its fullest brilliancy. She set down her pitcher of cream and slightly lowered the flame before she answered him.

"You've made the thing smoke," she complained. "Just look at the chimney. Mabel is spending the night with Mary Scarth and has Ned with her. She went over this afternoon."

"That's a lie!" he retorted brutally. "Mabel's in a madhouse, and the boy's dead. They were going to put me in a madhouse too—Anselm, and a devil of a doctor. They thought they fooled me, but they didn't. I knew they'd been closeted with Drake Reeny and that dead man in the swamp. They were after the money—damn 'em! Everybody's after the money. But I'll outwit 'em! I'll fix 'em!" he laughed discordantly.

Anna's knees smote together, but she faced him bravely, holding level eyes, and trying to dominate him with her will. The instinct to

save herself was now as strong as the impulse to succor him had been earlier.

"Come and eat your supper," she said quietly.

Trigg caught her wrists and held them as in a vise; his threatening eyes searched her face, his lips were drawn back from his white teeth, which gleamed through the darkness of his mustache like the teeth of an angry dog.

"I'll see them in hell before I'll give it up," he snarled. "Reeny, and those other fellows, and the dead man. It's mine! What use has the dead for money? Finding is keeping. It's *mine*, I say," he stamped his foot. Then his voice changed abruptly. "Do you want it, Anna? Must I give it to you?"

"No," she answered coldly. "I want nothing but to have you eat your supper so that I may clear away these things and go to bed. It's past midnight. Let go my hands, Trigg. You hurt me."

He dropped his hold and reseated himself docilely at the table. His old trust in her was revived and he allowed her to have her will with him.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

"BE GENTLE WITH HIM."

A VERY ill patient in the asylum hospital had kept Drs. Irène and Cooke out of bed until after midnight. The two men were returning across the grounds from the main building to their own house when the swift, regular beat of Salome's hoofs came to their hearing.

"There goes a messenger for a doctor," Cooke yawned, stretching out his arms and slightly twisting himself to ease his muscles; then he added "poor devil!"

"Which?" inquired Irène.

"Both," the other man answered, "doctor and patient alike have my sympathy, particularly the former. The last named may be cutting his job for good and so will get a chance for a respite. I've got bowels of compassion for my own kind."

Irène leaned slightly forward, and turned his ear to the sound.

"That messenger rides hard. Whatever it is must be important."

Cooke grunted. "The senders always think so, at least," he dryly observed. "That fellow isn't going to Morley, either. He's coming here. Listen! He left the village road at the turn."

The men paused and turned toward the gate, beyond which the road lay clear in the moonlight. The sound of the hoof-beats smote sharply, and perceptibly neared. "Haven't you got a patient out about the swamp somewhere?" Cooke questioned. "Perhaps the case has taken a bad turn."

"Impossible," Irène responded; "my patient out there solved the great problem at daybreak." Involuntarily, he bared his head for an instant.

The hoof-beats came nearer, Salome swept into sight and on to the gate. Her rider was hatless, and had risen in his stirrups, bending forward as though to ease his horse. Irène recognized the mare and made for the gate with an ejaculation of surprise and dismay; followed, more leisurely, by his companion. The gate flew open under his hand and he was outside and ready for the news, whatever it might be, before the mare had steadied herself from the pull-up. Shandy slipped from the saddle and gave place.

"Git on her!" he panted, "git on her, doctor,

an' ride! Miss Anna's dar by herse'f. It's wuss'n 'tother time kase he's a man. *Ride!*"

Without a look, or a question, Irène threw himself on the horse and turned her head. Whatever it might be he would find out for himself—speed was the main thing. He rose in his stirrups, as Shandy had done, and bent forward, speaking to the horse encouragingly and stroking her neck. Salome answered with a low whinny and pricked back her ears; she knew him and was doing her best; her age seemed to slip from her and she held to her work like a four year old; her deep nostrils flared wide and were red to the rim, the spume-flakes flew from her bit, and her legs moved with the precision of machinery. The blood of four great winners pumped through her heart and gave its impulse to her movements. A thrill passed through Irène as he pressed his knees to her sides.

To his anxiety the way seemed interminable; the moonlight mocked him, so cold it seemed and impartial; the road slipped away under him in a blurred streak. He had no time for the gate, and put Salome at the fence, as he had done once before. She cleared it like a bird and raced across the lawn. At the ha-ha he dismounted and turned the horse loose to find her own way to

the stable, or to wander whither she would. He crossed the foot bridge, not thinking, only dreading, and sped to the house.

Rollicker was on the veranda, but took no notice of him. Irène's hand was on the front door when it noiselessly opened and Anna slipped out into the moonlight. He caught both her hands in his excitement and wrung them hard. Relief choked him and he could only mutter under his breath "Thank God!"

In a moment he recovered himself and whispered: "What is it?"

"Trigg," she breathed in reply. "He's like Mabel. It's awful! I was alone when he came. Robin has gone to the city. He was sent for."

"Where is Trigg?"

He used the name without thought.

"In his room. I coaxed him. He's terribly suspicious and watchful. Come inside—and step softly. He must not know you are here."

Irène obeyed, and together they stole to the library. There Anna gave him an outline of what had happened in as few words as possible. She did not seem to realize that she had escaped a terrible danger; her thought was for Trigg—her pity for Trigg. Irène's heart turned cold and faint as he listened, knowing so well, out of

his fuller experience, what might have happened. The gravity of his countenance deepened and into his eyes came the physician's look which Anna knew and trusted. Once, by a movement of the hand, he interrupted her and listened. The silence of the house seemed to quiver, like a consciousness behind which lies terror.

"He bolted his door," Anna explained. "I made him believe that Robin was in Morley at that annual Historical meeting. This is the night for it. Trigg remembered that himself. He thinks Robin may be home any minute. If he heard the horse he'll think Robin has come. I want him to. He seems to dread seeing Robin—to fear him, somehow. I went upstairs singing, and then I took my shoes off and stole down the back way and locked myself in here to wait for you. Aunt Ceres is upstairs asleep. She's slept through it all. I've locked her door too."

Then they took counsel together and it was decided that Anna should return to her own room, and the comfort of Aunt Ceres' unconscious confidence in the security of the night. Irène, imitating as well as he could Hunter's halt, would betake himself to that gentleman's apartment and keep watch. He did not apprehend more trouble at present, he told her, the fatigue

of travel combined with the food he had eaten would probably make Trigg drowsy. The morrow must decide the things of itself.

As she left him Anna said wistfully, as she had said once before: "You will be gentle with him! If anything *should* happen you will be as gentle as the case will admit?"

And again he replied:

"You may trust me."

In her own room, Anna made not even a pretense of going to bed. She unbound her hair, shook it out, and coiled it afresh, but more loosely. Then she exchanged her close fitting dress for a loose dark flannel wrapper and put her feet into slippers. Aunt Ceres slumbered audibly, with the sighs and gruntings of corpulence. Anna closed the door softly between them and sat down by a window to watch the night out. Her room was a corner one, but one of its windows looked out on the same side of the house as did Trigg's, the side nearest the pine barren and the swamp. By lifting the sash of her window and leaning out sideways she could command a view of his.

The spring night was chill, edged already with the coolness which presages dawn. Anna wrapped herself in a shawl, for she wished to keep

the window open. Irène could not watch at all points and she must help him. The feeling that he was in the house gave her confidence, both for herself and for Trigg. Irène was so sure, so helpful, so equal to every emergency.

The moonlight waned to withdrawal. On this side of the house the shadows lay heavy; the dawn-darkness descended, like a curtain unfolded. The watcher rested her folded arms on the window-ledge and laid her head down upon them. Her nerves were tense and her senses alert, but her body was weary.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THROUGH THE SWAMP ONCE MORE.

AN hour passed, then another; the light of morning began to appear, faint, pallid, intangible at first, but strengthening as the gates of the east flared open. Along the horizon a pale glow was coming, and the exhalations of the night showed themselves, wraith like, in mist. The watcher at the window stirred and bent suddenly forward, scanning the space below with eager intentness. To her quickened sense had come a sound, cautious, yet distinct in the universal silence. Shutters were being stealthily unclosed. As she looked Anna could see them pushed back against the house side. They were the shutters of Trigg's room. Her heart gave a sickening bound and fell back. What was he going to do? She watched breathlessly, too much excited for any ordinary explanation to satisfy her. Her nerves vibrated like the strings of a violin.

Through the aperture below a man's legs protruded, and a man's body dropped lightly to the

ground. It was Trigg, dressed, as she could distinguish even in the imperfect light, in his old hunting suit. Her startled eyes sought swiftly for a gun, and then she thankfully remembered that Trigg's gun had been loaned to a neighbor months before and never returned. He could not do himself a mischief with that, at all events; then the possibilities of the lagoon presented themselves as she beheld Trigg take the path which led in the direction of the swamp. He was walking fast, like a man with a definite end in view.

Anna sprang to her feet and hurried downstairs. He must be followed and, if possible, coaxed back to the house; or at any rate, he must be watched so that no evil might chance to him. She never thought that he might work harm to others if left at large.

Irène responded almost instantly to her summons. After many noiseless expeditions to Trigg's bolted door during the preceding hours, he had succumbed to fatigue. Not having seen Trigg he was indisposed to take as serious a view of the case as Anna did; in his thought he made involuntary allowance for unconscious nervous exaggeration. To her wish that Trigg should be followed he yielded ready assent, but when it was

made plain to him that she intended herself to be one of the relief expedition he demurred.

"There's no use for that," he affirmed. "I can manage by myself perfectly. I'm used to cases of this sort."

Anna threw out her hands as though thrusting off his objections.

"I *must* go," she declared. "It would drive me mad too to sit here and wait, not knowing what may have happened. Trigg don't know you—he may resent your interference—and he's so strong—so strong—a powerful, sinewy man. You have no idea. Terror and uncertainty about you both would kill me! He's used to me—fond of me. I can coax him, perhaps, only I dare not follow alone."

He yielded, indeed he had no choice but to yield, and together they passed out into the dim light of the new day.

Trigg had gotten considerable start, but Anna knew the way he had taken and followed it like a hound on the trail. The path led swampward through the pine barren, where the scrub trees stood thick, limbed to the ground, and emitting a resinous odor. The path was narrow and they were compelled to follow it Indian file; it was a plantation short cut to the lumber wharf which

was also the terminus of the Morley road. About this wharf there were always boats tied, canoes, dug-outs, and rowboats of various sizes which belonged to the swampers thereabouts. Sometimes, if the owners happened to be thrifty men, these were locked; but the ordinary custom was to secure the chain by a stick thrust through its links. The swampers usually respected each other's right of property and it was seldom that a boat, or even an oar or paddle, was unlawfully appropriated. Oars and paddles therefore were usually to be found in the place handiest to leave them—that is, the bottom of the boat.

The light had increased so that all things were visible despite the illusionment of mist. The pursuers could see that their quarry had loosed one of the easily appropriated boats and taken to the water. Without an instant's hesitation Anna selected another and seated herself in the stern, motioning Irène to cast off and take his place at the oars. Trigg was some distance ahead, in the main channel, rowing swiftly. His face, of course, was toward them, so that they were forced to delay their start a little until he should round a bend. He must not know himself followed or he would give them the slip. If they were cautious he would mistake them for timber men

going to their work. Anna's hair had shaken from its coil and lay in a mass on her shoulders. Her shawl she had dropped before leaving the house. Irène took a dark silk handkerchief from his pocket and handed it to her; she recoiled her hair, high on her head, and folded the silk around it, knotting it in the similitude of a man's cap.

The sun rose; the mist lifted and hung in the tree tops. The reeds and marsh grasses showed a golden green shimmer as they swung to the breeze and the movements of the water. The morning tide was on, with a deep flow inland.

Trigg pulled steadily, doubling and twisting with the turns of the main channel but, as yet, not offering to leave it for any of the branch sluices which cross-cut the marsh. When he should get into the swamp proper Anna knew there would be no possibility of his leaving the canal, without having to force his way through jungle, until he should reach the lake surrounding Manitou Island.

The pair in the pursuing boat were silent for the most part; at intervals only a question or two passed, with the replies.

As they entered the swamp Irène asked where she supposed Trigg would go.

"To Manitou Island," Anna answered. "Or

else to Colonel Sturgeon's on the other side of the swamp. Trigg used to be fond of fishing in the tarn, and the colonel is the only man about here with whom he was ever intimate. There isn't any other place to go in this direction, except shingle-camps."

"Don't somebody live on the island? It seems to me that I've heard lately that old Reeny's idiot son harbored there."

"I've heard that too," Anna assented, and then paused, certain words of Trigg's spoken in excitement the night before coming back to her. What could Trigg have to do with Drake Reeny that the image of the idiot should assume prominence in his mania? What was that he had said about a dead man in the swamp? The significance of it all was hidden from her; but without definite cause her anxiety increased.

"Hurry!" she cried. "Row faster! He'll get out of sight and hearing if you don't. Nearer the lake a boat can wriggle among the trees readily, if paddled. He may quit the canal and elude us. If you are tired, give me the oars. I can row."

Irène disclaimed fatigue and increased the speed, rowing in workmanlike fashion which sent the boat ahead in clean lengths. His thought

also was busy. Suddenly he put another question:

"Where is his wife? Bartram's, I mean. Can she know of this?"

Anna started—with a swift sense of shock. She had forgotten that Trigg had a wife—that to any human creature his condition and welfare could be matter of interest save to those of his old home. In the awakening of Irène's question it seemed to her marvelous how completely she had lost sight of the existence of this other woman.


"I don't know," she answered. "Trigg has never brought his wife home. She is, relatively, an unknown quantity to us, although he mentions her in his letters to Robin. I fancy she is an invalid and spends much time abroad, at Carlsbad, and other such places." Then she added: "Her people would let her know, even if she should be away from home. It was her father, Mr. Anselm, who telegraphed Robin."

The subject dropped, and the boat sped on its way. Overhead, the interlacing branches robbed the growing day of its power, transmuting the clear light of the outside world into a shimmering green haze. The dark water, too far inland now to appreciably feel the quickening of the sea,

moved at its own pace, sluggishly. They rounded a long curve and Anna uttered an ejaculation of dismay. The trees stood farther apart here, away there were breaks in the undergrowth, and Trigg's boat had disappeared.

What was to be done? Even to Anna's insistence the enterprise of tortuously wriggling through a trackless waste of lagoon and jungle in search of a madman seemed futile. In spite of their caution Trigg had doubtless suspected pursuit and so intentionally doubled. The swamp was as familiar to him as to the animals bred and reared in its noisome recesses, while to Irène and to Anna it was, apart from the regular track, all *terra incognita*. They might row round their quarry almost at oar's length and never perceive him, so thick and matted was the cane brake and undergrowth here about the margin of the lake. Trigg might even now be watching them exultingly, himself unseen.

They consulted, Irène as fully aroused now to the gravity of the situation as was Anna herself. For a creature bereft of reason, this desolate, mournful place seemed to teem with danger and death. Anna's hands locked themselves together in her lap and the heavy tears fell upon them. Her face looked drawn and pallid and she seemed



suddenly to have aged. Irène bent to his oars again. He would row out on the lake and around the island just to satisfy her that further pursuit now was useless. Then he would take her home and telegraph for Hunter, unless indeed that gentleman should already be on his way home, which seemed probable. If Trigg should remain in the swamp a posse would have to be organized to track him down. That would be men's work—swampers' work. And it seemed terrible.

The dark tarn lay waveless, and glassed by the morning light to a sheen as of metal new bur-nished; through its depths the reflections of clouds seemed to drift, and, in its midst, Manitou Island duplicated itself in shadow. As they emerged from the trees Anna threw up her hand and motioned to Irène to cease rowing. He did so, and turned sideways, glancing over his shoulder.

Between the island and the entrance to the canal a canoe rested, motionless as though anchored. In it sat a man, slouched forward, with his elbows on his knees and his hands supporting a primitive fishing pole; the cork floated idly and the man seemed to watch it with intentness; his back was toward them, but they could see that it was not Trigg.

Where could Trigg be?

In an instant the question was answered. Trigg's boat shot out from the shadows away along the lagoon and made for the center space. He stood in it, erect, lightly balanced, an athletic, powerful figure, graceful in every movement with the unstudied grace of sinew and strength. He used one of his oars paddle-wise, and his course was direct for the fisherman. They were acquaintances of the past.

As Trigg's boat ran alongside his own Drake Reeny looked up and rose to his feet, dropping his rod and causing the canoe to oscillate. His eyes sparkled with anger and his rough hands clenched into fists. The sight of Trigg evidently aroused unpleasant associations. Whether Trigg's own first intention had been pacific or hostile is of small moment. The reflex of Drake's mood fell on his like sparks upon gunpowder. His lips drew away from his teeth in a snarl and, with a lithe bound, he sprang from his own boat into the idiot's canoe and grappled with him.

They were nearly of a size, and well matched in muscle and brawn; they struggled, like wrestlers in a ring, standing firm on their legs, but swaying and bending. The canoe rocked and dipped, shipping water. The other boat drifted

away, dancing on the short waves which chopped the surface of the tarn. Irène bent to his oars, as one who pulls a race, straining each sinew. Anna's face was as the face of the dead, only her eyes seemed alive—opened wide, and darkening with terror.

The canoe careened to the struggling movements. Trigg had a body-grip like a vise, but the idiot's hand was twisted in his collar, the horny knuckles pressed into his throat. He strove to rid himself of the oppression, to throw his adversary backward and fall on him. There was a lurch, a lunge forward, an echoing scream from the lips of a woman, and the waters of the tarn parted to receive the struggling bodies with a dull reverberation which shuddered along its surface and repeated itself, whisperingly, among the trees.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### WHAT THE QUICKSAND GETS, IT KEEPS.

FOR nearly an hour the pair rowed about, scanning the waters as though they would fain make plummets of sight and penetrate down, down through the darkling fluid to the shuddering sands beneath. When ripples caused by the paddling of turtles, or wild ducks, trembled over the surface, or the air bubbles of a fish's breathing arose, they watched breathlessly, hoping and fearing, in excitement tense to pain. They examined both boats and towed them to the island, securing them there to a cypress stump at the landing. Both boats were empty, save for the rude fishing tackle and tin can of bait which lay in the canoe. They landed and examined the cabin and the shed behind it, futilely, but because they could not bear to go away yet, and must do something.

The cabin showed signs of the idiot's rough housekeeping, a bed of skins and frowsy blankets in one corner, a few cooking utensils, a pail of

dark swamp water on a shelf, and a low fire smoldering on the hearth, chips, and sticks of junpier, and in front a cypress log nearly charred through.

The cabin told nothing; here were only the forlorn details of human life robbed of most of its accessories; they turned to leave it. As they crossed the threshold the charred log broke and fell apart with a light sound, like the faint echo of a footfall, and pale smoke ascended from the severed chunks and met, wraith-like, in the dark throat of the chimney. Anna's tears began to fall afresh—slowly and miserably, as though they came from a nearly spent source.

To Irène it was a relief that she could weep.

"Let us go," she moaned. "This horrible place is haunted. I feel things I can't see, and know that beyond hearing voices speak. We can do no good by staying. Take me away! Take me home to my brother."

Irène humored her. "Come," he said, and placed her in the boat that had brought them. He must take her home and put her in the care of women. After that he would return to the tarn himself, with men and implements for probing and dragging, and, if necessary, guns to fire along the water. That the men in their struggle had drowned one another was beyond a perad-

venture; but something must be done for the recovery of their bodies.

As though she divined his intention, the woman replied to it.

"It will be useless," she told him. "The bottom of the lake is a quicksand. Everyone knows it. We——" she broke off her sentence, and her white face contracted with pain.

Her words proved verity. The swampers, when mustered, expressed their willingness to do anything the doctor might direct, but over his scheme of dragging the lake about Manitou Island, or probing its waters with hooked poles, they shook their heads sagaciously, and with the aspect of men well-informed. That which Manitou Lake received returned no more to the sight of men, they declared. Whole parks of artillery might be planted, backed by the magazine of the world, and to its thunderous invocation that sepulcher would vouchsafe no response.

The fact of quicksands in the lake was ancient history, but whether the entire bottom shifted, or the suction was confined to spots none knew, or had means of ascertaining. Many of the swampers, however, averred that, at certain hours, the fish forsook the lake for the neighboring lagoons, and that during these periods the

water quivered—not violently, but with a movement sufficiently perceptible to attract an accustomed eye. At such times the timbermen were wont to say that “them old Injun braves was shakin’ tomahawks down below.” It had become a saying of the camps all around.

Robin Hunter confirmed the men’s statement. His people had lived in the vicinity of the swamp since before the migration of the coast tribes. How, or by whom, the discovery had been first made was lost in the mists of the past, but the fact itself had been communicated to the white settlers by the Indians. By them it had been considered incontrovertible evidence of the presence of the Great Spirit in that spot. Manitou’s favorite abode lay encircled by death—and a grave.

Javan Anselm returned with Hunter and remained at Manningham many days. For his satisfaction many futile attempts were made for the recovery of his son-in-law’s body, all barren of result, according to the forecast of the natives. Anselm told them that Trigg had been “a bit queer” at times for more than a year, but no one had attached any importance to it. Mrs. Bartram had been cabled for, but could not reach home under a fortnight, at soonest. Her father

appeared to dread the shock for her inexpressibly; she was delicate, he explained, and his only child. She had been much attached to her husband, although her health had often compelled her to remain away from him for months at a time. Of Trigg himself, Anselm spoke heartily, regretfully, praising him after his kind. No better business man lived, he declared, than Bartram had been; shrewd, practical, long-headed, and prompt on a deal. His estate would provide well for his widow.

Hunter, whose big heart ached for his boy, all of whose follies and sins had, for his own people, been washed away forever by the water that covered him, listened with what patience and sympathy he might to the financier's complaints and laudations. He was courteous to his guest, giving him every attention, but he was not sorry when Anselm took his departure. They looked at life from such diverse standpoints. Hunter did not care about Trigg's estate, or what might become of it. What he wanted was to be still with his grief, and to steal away by himself to whisper the burial service over that Lethean water which covered his boy—his poor Mabel's brother.

For many weeks Anna was prostrated, going

about the house like a shadow, miserable and nervous. The tragedy haunted her sleep, causing her to start awake at all hours with the scene repeating itself before her mental vision.

Trigg Bartram's death made a tremendous stir in the neighborhood, and, for a time, little else was talked of. Dr. Irène took upon himself all the burden of answering questions and satisfying, as far as might be, public curiosity, shielding the brother and sister from gossip and comment, of which there will always be plenty even among sympathetic and well-meaning people. As soon as it was practicable, he made Hunter take his sister to a quiet place in the mountains where, externally, there would be naught to remind her of the tragedy. Here she remained all summer, boarding with some kind people who asked her few questions, and were ignorant of Manningham and its late melancholy happenings.

Irène wrote to her often, but made no attempt to see her, or to bring himself to her thoughts as other than a faithful friend. And with this Anna was content, feeling gratefully his delicacy, his care for her, and learning more and more to appreciate the unselfishness of his nature. She made no effort to return home before the mountains had done their beneficent work. There was

no need to be anxious about Robin, or about anyone. Irène would care for her home, would watch over and minister to her people. In that knowledge she rested.

Before the summer was over she wrote to Trigg's wife, not alluding to the tragedy of his death, but speaking of him simply and tenderly; giving little incidents of their childhood together at Manningham, and dwelling on his love for his own sister and constant thought of her. To Anna it seemed that a wife must be interested in these things.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE SECRET OF THE BREVIARY.

ANNA had been at home again several days when her brother received a letter from one of the Virginia Bartrams. This gentleman, a distant cousin of Mrs. Hunter's, was a resolute genealogist and keenly interested in the collection of material for a family history which he proposed issuing for private circulation, and illustrating with portraits. The war record of William Bartram had been sufficiently brilliant to make him a noteworthy figure in the family, and his wife had been a famous beauty in her day, so that the chronicler was desirous of securing copies of their miniatures.

"Do you know where the pictures are, Anna?" Hunter inquired. "They were here, I know, but I haven't seen them for years. Where were they kept?"

"In old Mr. Bartram's desk in Trigg's room," Anna answered. "I'll get them for you. The Bartram relics are all there. They were never

divided and Trigg took nothing away except his father's seal ring."

Hunter waited on the back veranda talking with Shandy, who had just brought out the buggy. He was going in to his classes and in something of a hurry, but it seemed to him a good plan to take the miniatures in to the Morley photographer at once.

To Anna's surprise the combination this time gave her no trouble; on the contrary it seemed stamped on her memory and her fingers, instinctively, formed it. The desk had evidently not been opened since she herself had closed it that night long ago. The dispositions of the contents of the pigeonholes was as she remembered, and in front, on a canvas shot-bag, lay her diagram just as it had fluttered from her fingers when she shut down the lid. She pushed the spring of the secret drawer, confident that here too all would be untouched. It opened with the same obstruction, and again she slipped in her hand and pressed down the contents. The silver bound missal lay on top, as she had placed it, and inspired her with a renewal of curiosity. Her brother was in a hurry, however, so she took him the miniatures and then came back. The secret of the book's clasp defied her still, so when she

closed the desk she kept it out, intending to show it to Robin on his return and see whether satisfactory results might not be achieved by combining their intelligences.

During the morning, however, Irène called in, on his way over to Colonel Sturgeon's, and she showed the book to him. He agreed with her in supposing it to be a missal, and examined it with curiosity while Anna explained to him where she had found it. He pronounced it of convent make, and even gave its year and place of manufacture—a certain religious house in Normandy—by cabalistic signs stamped in the leather; but the clasp puzzled him. There must be a spring somewhere, he said, and as he considered himself gifted at puzzles he proposed that he should take the book home with him and work out the solution. Anna consented readily enough, only stipulating that he should return it the following day with its secrets disclosed.

Irène was much occupied during the day, but in the evening he took out the missal and set himself to examine it carefully. He had the library to himself, as both his colleagues were out, calling in the village, and Mrs. Vaughn had her own sitting-room. He scanned the book closely, turning it slowly about in his hands. At first

the side with the crucifix commanded his attention and he examined with interest and appreciation its exquisite workmanship. Such perfect handicraft, in those days, reserved itself principally for the service of nobles and the Church. A cunning worker in metals this smith must have been. Irène turned the book and inspected the arms-bearing shield on the other side. At the first cursory glance he had supposed them to be monastic, but a closer examination revealed the fact that they were individual—the arms of some noble family. More than that, they seemed curiously familiar. Where could he have seen them before? His nerves thrilled and tingled like those of a man on the verge of some more than usually interesting discovery. He hastily rose and went to the corner where he kept the few books which had descended to him from the old French emigrant. They were mostly medical works, but on the inside of the cover of each was pasted an engraved book-plate. Irène took one down, brought it to the table, and compared the arms depicted on the book-plate with those borne by the shield. They were identical.

With curiosity whetted to an edge Irène worked at the clasp, applying a persuasive thumb nail to every inequality and excrescence of the

metal work. At last it occurred to him to attempt to turn the crucifix entire, and he did so. This proved the solution of the difficulty; the cross moved without trouble and the clasp, with a metallic click, fell open. Contrary to Irène's expectations, there were no leaves of either parchment or paper inside. The thing was a cunningly contrived box, or receptacle for small articles of value.

It contained now an old-fashioned leather pocketbook secured with a metal clasp, and what looked to be a thick letter, folded carefully, but unsealed. Irène took it out unhesitatingly and opened it. He had a curious feeling that in so doing he acted within his right.

The letter was written in French and bore date of many years before. It commenced "My beloved grandson," and Irène turned hastily to the signature, feeling confident what it would be even before his eyes rested upon it. There it stood, distinct and legible—Jean Lacroix Irène. The doctor rose quietly, locked the door, and then set himself to discover what his dead kinsman might have had to communicate to his missing kinsman which could require secrecy.

After some deprecation of harsh judgment which revealed the love the old man bore for the

boy whom he was thus taking, belated, into his confidence, Jean Irène went back to the days of his own youth in Charleston, before expatriation had seemed necessary for him in the eyes of his family. Although, after human wont, he made out the best case for himself which truth would permit, Jean Lacroix Irène had been, even on his own showing, a *mauvais sujet* of a pronounced type. Among other escapades, he had formed a discreditable connection with a woman of a bad sort, but handsome withal, and, apparently, shrewd and domineering to an unusual degree. After three years of intimacy Jean had grown sick of the woman and her exactions and become well-minded to have done with the affair.

Here he had been blocked, however, by the fact that during his first infatuation the woman had been clever enough to make him go through some sort of ceremony with her one evening at a carouse in a neighboring town. This ceremony she subsequently declared to be valid, and produced marriage lines and a priest who swore to her statements. Jean Irène did not believe a syllable of the story, because of the character of all parties engaged, the priest even being a dissolute fellow who, for years, had only escaped being unfrocked by superlative cunning. But he

was powerless to disprove the statement because he knew very well that at the time of the occurrence he had been too drunk to discriminate between jest and earnest. It had been easy to prevent the woman from making public her claim by giving her no rival, and also by making her realize his absolute dependance upon the parental pocketbook.

Of two things Jean Irène appeared to be confident; one, of the woman's love for himself; and the other, of her faithfulness to him. They had one child, a boy.

About the time that this affair had reached its climax of irksomeness, certain other misdemeanors of Jean's had caused his father to decide on change of air for him. Jean, apparently, had fallen in with the arrangement willingly enough; but before his departure he essayed to protect his family from harassment by robbing the woman who claimed to be his wife of her documentary evidence. Fortunately for him, the priest had succumbed to drunkenness and heart disease months before, going to his account, so to speak, suddenly, and unshriven. Himself, Jean protected by flitting without warning and leaving no address behind.

His career in Barbadoes lay open to the sight



of the world. He had been taken into partnership by his uncle; he had acquired, and merited, the confidence of the community; he had made a large fortune, and in fullness of time, quite forgetful of former entanglements, he had married a sweet, pious lady to whom he was deeply attached and with whom he had lived in great happiness many years.

Why he had never destroyed the paper was not made clear—possibly under all his stoutness of denial there lurked a grain of doubt which made it seem an unhandsome advantage to take of the child, whom Irène declared it had been his original intention to provide for in some way. After that he may have forgotten it, or been actuated by the fatuity which so frequently compels misdoers to retain proof of sin. However it might be explained, certain it was that the marriage certificate emblazoned with the dead priest's signature and Jean Irène's own, remained in evidence, and, along toward the close of the old man's life, when the true wife of his love had been taken, and of his children none remained, save the young maid, and this boy to whom his soul clave as did the soul of Israel unto Joseph, the memory of the sin of his youth arose and with bitterness rebuked him.

As well he might, the old man shrank from stirring the affair, but his conscience would not let him rest, so perchance, for quit-rent to the monitor he had left this record for his grandson, together with a good sum of money in American bank notes and divers instructions. It had seemed to Irène quite beyond the range of possibility that the woman should be still alive, and his thought had been altogether for the boy.

As soon as he should have attained his majority, young Jean Irène was enjoined to journey to Charleston, and there, obeying certain directions and clues given him, to track out this, at worst, left-handed connection. If the son—whose right to inheritance the father denied in speech, while he admitted it in act—should be living, the money must be conveyed to him anonymously. If dead, it must in the same way be transmitted to his family, should he have left any. After this had been done the old man decreed that his confession should be burned, together with the document, which might, or might not be a lie, and the pocketbook which contained it. This pocketbook had been the property of the boy's mother and contained likewise a certificate of the child's baptism, given by

the same priest who claimed to have performed the marriage ceremony.

Dr. Irène examined everything, going through the pocketbook with painstaking care, and even running his thumb nail along the edges of its various compartments, lest haply there might be some hidden screed not mentioned. His search yielded nothing further from that source, so, placing the things before him on the table, he leaned back in his chair and set himself to follow his namesake, in thought, from the day of the reading of that confession. That it must have been a shock he could well believe. Père Emmanuel had described the young man as a sensitive, imaginative recluse. To such an one ugly facts of life, low temptation and crude sin, would prove peculiarly revolting. That the nature of the younger man was different from that of his grand-sire was proven by the older man's deprecation of harshness in the earlier part of his confession. Out of his deep human comprehension and experience, Dr. Irène felt sorry for his kinsmen—for the one in that he must uncover foulness, and for the other that he must gaze upon it. Then there must be the rankling doubt which that document could not fail to implant.

Unconsciously Dr. Irène began to put himself

in young Jean's place. What would have been his own course under the circumstances? An instant effort at verification, or disproof; an effort after certainty of some sort. Jean Irène's impulse, apparently, had been the same. Here in these papers lay the real motive of his journey to America; here was the arcana of that search for kindred which was susceptible of two interpretations. Influenced, then, by motives inevitably complex, motives which involved duties to the dead and the living, young Jean Irène, discreetly silent, had journeyed to Charleston and there had inaugurated and carried on inquiries which had resulted in—*what?*

The brow of the thinking man corrugated and the index finger of his right hand tapped a slow tattoo on the arm of his chair, as though it were an indicator recording points.

The journey to Charleston, together with some external evidence relative to young Jean's life while in that city the priest's story supplied, but this new development carried the thing forward many degrees, supplied truer motives and suggested more comprehensive springs of conduct. The narrative of Père Emmanuel broke off abruptly with the disappearance of the missing man from Charleston. Here this new evidence

came in. Jean Marie Irène had come to Morley. This much the breviary proved.

Now what had brought him? Dr. Irène set aside as improbable any idea that he himself had been the attraction. A meeting with him might have been an incidental inducement, but the doctor felt assured that it had not been a primary motive with his kinsman. He felt curiously certain that those researches in Charleston had put some additional clew in Jean Irène's hands, pursuance of which had brought him to Morley.

What could have been the clew? Dr. Irène's thought quickened; all the detective instincts within him were astir, whetting his faculties keenly and supplying his penetration with added acuteness. His mind worked all around the neighborhood. Who in it had, or was accredited with having French blood? Who——? He drew in his breath suddenly, and a great many things seemingly disconnected fell into place as connecting links of a lengthening chain. Where had this book been found? Then that scene on the lake when Trigg Bartram and Drake Reeny locked in the death struggle flashed into his mind, together with the recollection that one night of storm during the spring in which the Barbadoes Irène disappeared, both men had been in the

swamp. Could the young fellow have been there also? And if so who was responsible for his presence? Who was responsible for that which might—nay, that which must have happened? What could Jean Irène of Barbadoes have to do with Trigg Bartram, or with Drake Reeny?

On the latter name his mind paused, and it suddenly assumed a new and strange significance. Irène—Reeny! Might not the one readily degenerate into the other on untutored tongues? Intuitively, he felt convinced that it had so degenerated. The old man's name had been John also—restore John Reeny to its original state and what would result? Jean Irène, of course. The name of the woman who claimed marriage with his great-uncle had been Nancy Drake; the name of the squatter's idiot son was Drake.

During his last illness John Reeny had more than once affirmed to the doctor that he came of "good folks down Charleston way" and that his grandmother had told him that if right could be done he would have money. When pressed beyond this he had hesitated, cast vaguely about in his memory and averred that "whenst the old 'ooman passed over" he was but a boy and had not "listened sensible to her talk." Only this

assertion of hers had always stuck in his memory. His father had known about it, perhaps; but his father had never told him the rights of it; only saying once or twice when grannie was out of hearing that the "old 'ooman had been a gay one in her day." The inference seemed plain, but strangely enough the sick man appeared to pride himself on having some drops of gentle blood, no matter how he had come by them. He would allude to it from time to time in a braggadocio way, as though it constituted a claim for him on the doctor's notice. Irène had accepted the statement without much thought, for sickness had refined and sharpened the squatter's face until certain race lines were plain to be seen. Once or twice the doctor had even been vaguely sensible of something familiar in the contour of the other's countenance. He had not actively defined the matter even when, after death, the thought came to him that old John Reeny, carefully tended and decently clad for the first time within his recollection of him, looked unmistakably like a gentleman. Recalling that dead face in the light of his present knowledge of the kinship between them, Dr. Irène recognized that it had been his own father whom John Reeny had resembled.

It was singular how this matter had adjusted itself. He had ministered to the squatter, had borne his funeral expenses, and even had him buried in a suit of his own clothes, from a sort of feeling that Reeny's claim to French extraction imposed the obligation upon him. It now appeared that he had kept a kinsman off the county.

Having brought the matter to this point the doctor rose and slowly paced the study. With what to him appeared sufficient accuracy he could trace the sequence of events down to the time of Jean Irène's coming to that neighborhood. He knew that which had brought him, and could conjecture pretty well what might have been his line of conduct had nothing unforeseen intervened. Something unforeseen must have occurred to account for the young man's disappearance. What could it have been? The answer seemed obvious. Death. But where and by whose hand? Did the waters around Manitou Island sepulcher Jean Irène also? If so, who had brought him—a stranger—to such an out of the way place?

These, and other questions presented themselves to the doctor for solution, and he turned them over and over and, for the time, could make

nothing of them. Two resolutions alone he formed: first to probe, if possible, this mystery to its center, and second to keep the matter as much as might be to himself, because of the unexplained connection of Trigg Bartram with the affair.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### "THE SINS OF THE FATHERS."

FOR the next few weeks Dr. Irène thought of little else save his kinsman's disappearance. His interest increased in poignancy as he elaborated and discarded one theory after another in regard to it, and within him the detective fever awoke and raged. He purposely kept away from Manningham, not wishing to answer questions about the breviary. This he could manage the more easily because the genealogical Bartram, not satisfied with the data already in his possession, elected about this time to swoop down on Manningham, and during his stay, which covered several weeks, contrived to keep both Hunter and his sister occupied and interested with matters far removed from the doings of the later day Bartrams.

To the doctor this was a wonderful relief, enabling him to postpone explanations, which, as he pushed his investigations, it seemed to him

well-nigh impossible that he should make. Partly through a chance conversation with Joe Scarth, who happened to be at home on a visit, and partly by judicious inquiries through other channels, he had become possessed of the fact that at the time, or just previous to his sundering connection with the lumber firm, Trigg Bartram had come into possession of funds. Just how large a sum Irène was unable to discover, but it appeared a definitely established fact, on 'change, that Bartram had endorsed his first speculative venture substantially. The doctor's intercourse with the Manningham people had been too intimate for him not to have acquired considerable knowledge of family matters, so that he felt tolerably well convinced that no money had, within recent years, fallen to Trigg by inheritance. How, then, had he gotten money, before the Anselm connection, in a sum sufficient to command respect on 'change? The doctor's face grew grave and a trifle stern. The finding of the rifled breviary in a secret place of Trigg's desk took on a sinister significance. That there had been a meeting between the West Indian and young Bartram seemed certain. But where, and for what purpose? Instinctively Irène shrank away from associating the thought of murder with a

member of his friend's family. It seemed horrible to him.

From almost the beginning he gave up the idea that Jean Irène had left the train at Morley. It seemed impossible that a stranger should have landed in that quiet place, where every infinitesimal happening was an event of magnitude, and have instituted inquiries of any sort without attracting attention. True, nearly eight years had passed; but eight years are to the bucolic mind as eight days.

On the inland side of the great swamp region the main trunk of the Coast Line railway passed, hugging firm ground, but curving seaward wherever it was practicable. Just across from Morley, as the crow flies, the swamp narrowed so that a station on the main line, called Tarleton Junction, was but a scant fifteen miles away. At this junction the road branched and made its way around to Morley, and one or two other small towns of lumber, or fishing, importance. Tarleton was a settlement of another sort from the older place, a mere railway town, with shops and works which had come into being with the road. Having discarded Morley as the probable terminus of Jean Irène's journey, the doctor settled on Tarleton, to which place he repaired for the pur-

pose of investigation, and with the hope of establishing for himself a definite point of departure. At the junction he made two discoveries, which, to his mind, made his hypothesis tenable, if not certain: one, that John Reeny had, in former years, lived in the place until dissipation, increase of poverty, and, perhaps, that reputed connection with illicit swamp distilleries made it convenient for him to remove himself and his belongings to that cabin on Colonel Sturgeon's land; and the other, that Tarleton boasted a low gambling hell of which Reeny had been a *habitué* up to the time of his death. Indeed, it appeared that the squatter himself, and also his idiot son, were more often seen about the junction than in more respectable Morley. The doctor had always accounted Reeny a *mauvais sujet*, but all preconceived ideas of his worthlessness appeared to fall short of the reality.

Standing on the junction platform Dr. Irène thought backward, and, for the time being, strove to put himself in his kinsman's place. The idea had flashed through him that he would, as far as might be, act over what might well have been the sequence of events of that day long past. He would trail, hound-fashion, the steps which the dead man might have taken. Had a clew really

come into his hands in Charleston, as appeared almost certain, the West Indian, tracking his quarry, would have come straight to this place, would have made inquiries, would have located the man of whom he was in search as living on Colonel Sturgeon's land, would have obtained a guide and straightway proceeded to the plantation to interview Reeny on his own hearthstone. Taking the bearings of the country, Irène decided that the nearest way to the Sturgeon place would be through the swamp. He turned to a loafer and put the question.

"Yes, sir," the man assented, "thar's a nigh cut over to the colonel's that a-way. 'Tain't used much 'cep'n by lumbermen, though. Ole man Reeny used to come that a-way frequent. He slouched about the swamp a sight arter one thing an' another. Colonel always comes round by the road hissef—whenst he comes at all, which ain't often, 'long o' Morley bein' handier. Gwine out to Sturgeon's, doctor?"

Irène nodded. He wanted to go the short way, through the swamp, he said; and then he inquired how he should manage it.

The loafer lifted himself accommodately off a pile of gunny-bags, and sauntered to the end of the platform.

"Take that thar path right ahead," he directed, "an' travel straight arter your snout 'twell you come out at ole man Pat Lambert's. He farms a patch 'long the aidge o' the swamp, an' his house sets in er slashy sort o' a hollow, tolerable overgrow'd. You can't miss it. Pat will be mighty apt to have a canoe, or a dug-out handy. An' ef he's got it you'll git it sure. He's a nay-borly cuss, is Lambert. Ef you're in luck you'll git a skiff. He has one sometimes. Gwine now?" as Irène turned to descend the station steps. "Well, so-long! Don't git lost nowhars in the swamp, more'n you kin help."

Irène acknowledged the other's courtesy and solicitude with a queer kind of certainty that all this was repetition—that nearly eight years previous some such scene and conversation had taken place on this same spot, but with other actors. The party of the first part he knew; who might have been the party of the second part he was seeking to discover.

He found the swamper's cabin without trouble and there left his horse, letting it be inferred that his professional services were required at one of the shingle camps in the direction of Colonel Sturgeon's. Everything must turn out to help a physician on his way, so Irène had no difficulty

in borrowing a boat, or in getting general directions for his guidance. As he pushed off and headed for the dark line of trees which indicated the beginning of the swamp a curious feeling of unreality and excitement fell upon him, and he plied his oar with a strange, unreasoning certainty that every boat-length was bringing him that much closer to the solution of the mystery.

He had never penetrated the swamp from this side, and he noticed differences. There was less outlying marsh, the jungle was denser, the boughs which met overhead hung low and thick, producing a semi-obscurity at noontide, and the one narrow channel wriggled inward with no branch channels, as on the other side. The feeling that he was tracking an invisible quarry grew on Irène as he penetrated deeper and deeper into the gloom; his nerves tingled and his arms moved with rhythmic strength. His thought went back to that other day when he had similarly rowed in pursuit of a madman. He rowed now in pursuit of a madman's secret.

Would the two journeys culminate at the same point? From the moment of starting he had felt certain that it would be so, and when at length his boat shot out on to the dark waters surrounding Manitou Island he was not surprised.

He ran the vessel aground at the cypress stump he remembered, secured it, and took his way straight to the cabin. It seemed in pretty much the same condition as when he had previously visited it, only that now there was no smoke from the chimney and the door stood half open and sagged upon its hinges.

The tragedy of the spring previous had given the place a bad name and the lumbermen gave it a wide berth whenever practicable. Some people, principally negroes, even went so far as to declare both island and lake haunted, and to affirm that on certain quarters of the moon, boats were plainly to be seen spectrally flitting across the water. Struggles too, they claimed, as of fighting men, could be heard, followed invariably by the sullen reverberation of the death plunge. Among the colored folks such tales were rife, and neither love nor money would induce them to penetrate the swamp after nightfall, at least in the direction of Manitou Island. One of the principal venders of the gossip was old Wyatt Sturgeon, as he was called, the negro who had nursed John Reeny through his last illness. Like all ignorant and superstitious people, Wyatt had scant patience and no tenderness at command for mental affliction. He had been wont to blackguard Drake

Reeny unmercifully during his life, but now that the dignity of supernatural restlessness had been accorded him, the idiot's credit had been entirely rehabilitated. Wyatt, in his fear of nocturnal visitation, even went so far as to attempt to establish a character for filial consideration for Drake, on the scant ground that the son had twice visited his father during his—Wyatt's—sojourn at the squatter's cabin.

"Fust time he come he never said nothin'," the old man informed Dr. Irène. "He jus' come up de steps an' stood wid one hand 'pon one door-jam an' t'other on the yuther, an' sorter leanded forred an' peeked in. Ther ole man was lyin' 'pon de bed wid he eyes shet. He opened 'em whenst Drake's shadow fell 'cross de flo', but he never said nothin', nuther. Dem folks looked at one n'other des ez lonesome ez ailin' fowels, an' den Drake he went away. Dat was in de daytime. T'other time whenst he come 'twas night. He come in dat time an' sot a good mess o' fish he'd fctched 'pon de table an' den sot hisse'f down whar he could see his daddy, but out'n hittin' distance. He looks so natu'l an' sensible settin' thar thet I uped an' tole him, I did, thet I'd got some traps to set, an' wanted to step over to my house arter some clo'es anyhow, an' he

mout as well mind de ole man twell I got back. He 'greed, an' I went. Whenst I got back he was settin' in de same place an' his daddy was sleep. Dat was de day befo' de ole man was tooken speechless. Drake Reeny want no right down mean fellow, like his daddy, nohow."

The doctor glanced around the bare cabin which had been the poor idiot's last abiding place with a pitiful feeling in his heart. It was so ugly, dingy, and forlorn; the rough, smoke blackened walls, the shadowed corners, the dirty, littered floor, the revolting heap of rags against the wall which had once served for a bed, all disgusted him. How could any intellect expand, or any nature develop when its physical casket was kept amid such surroundings? He felt compassion for the poor creature whose home this had been.

The only light came from the door and fell obliquely, leaving half the place in shadow. A slight rustling and scrambling in one corner attracted the doctor's attention and he turned toward it. A coat hanging on a peg oscillated as though something was moving on the logs behind it. Irène stooped for a stick and with it lifted the coat from its nail, disclosing the sharp muzzle and keen little eyes of a young opossum

which was squatting in a crevice. Irène prodded it with his stick and the little creature rolled over, as well as the limited space would permit, stretched out its limbs and closed its eyes, feigning to be dead. The coat had fallen in a heap and the doctor raised it with intention to restore it to its nail. It was a fairly decent garment, not by any means beyond service, and it seemed curious that no passing swamper had appropriated it. Then the swamp superstition concerning drowned men's clothes recurred to him, and he felt convinced that the garment would be left to rot where it hung. No swamper would risk seeing the dead man's face in every pool of water he should pass with the coat on his back.

True to his intention of minutely examining everything which the cabin contained, Irène walked back to the doorway with the coat in his hand. It was an ordinary slop-shop garment of the sort usually kept in village stores, and had pockets on the outside. These yielded nothing save some rusty nails and screws, a fishing line, with a disabled hook, wrapped carefully around a splinter of wood, and a lidless box which had formerly contained patent pills of some sort. The inner breast pocket panned out better, and from it Irène drew a small bundle of what at first

seemed dirty paper, but which felt hard inside. The outer covering was a bit of newspaper, which removed, disclosed a worn, battered crucifix, around which was folded another paper containing writing.

Irène sat down in the doorway with his nerves thrilled. He remembered to have noticed a crucifix, suspended by a leathern string, about his patient's neck, and had once put to him the question whether he was a Catholic. Reeny's reply had been that his grannie was, and that she had hung the crucifix around his neck. It would bring him luck, she had said, but that had been a mistake. He had never had any luck in his life, but he had kept the cross, partly because it "war'n't wuth much" and partly because the old woman had enjoined it upon him to hold on to it. His wife had been a Catholic also. During his son's nocturnal visit to him old Reeny must have passed on the heritage.

The doctor took a magnifier from his pocket and subjected the cross to a minute inspection. It was tarnished and dirty, so that the fine lines of its workmanship were partially obliterated, but in design and general appearance it resembled the cross on the Irène breviary, as a cadet of a family may resemble the head of the house.

Irène laid the crucifix on his knee with the figure side down, pinched up a little earth, and, with his handkerchief, vigorously applied it to the metal of the back. As he expected, a few moments' friction revealed the silver, and also that which he sought, a tiny crest and the letters J. L. I. Had additional proof been needed to establish the identity of the dead, here it was.

Putting the crucifix in his pocket, Dr. Irène proceeded to examine the paper in which it had been wrapped. It was a soiled sheet of ordinary commercial paper, and the writing, bungling and almost illegible, covered three sides of it. The scribe was evidently an unaccustomed one, and both penmanship and spelling left much to be desired. Irène bungled through it first without getting more than a general impression of its meaning, and then worked it out again more understandingly. The story it told, in brief, was this:

Jean Irène, described by the paper as a "likely lookin' furrener, whar kept his name to hisse'f," had left the train, on the morning of the last day of his ill-fated journey, at Tarleton Junction, had there inquired his way to Colonel Sturgeon's, and had been directed, as had the doctor, to Pat Lambert's as a man likely to help him through

the swamp. There he had fallen in with the idiot, who readily agreed to convey him farther on his journey for a small consideration. Taking the stranger in his boat, Drake had brought him as far as Manitou Island, where, at his suggestion, they had halted to get a bite of something to eat. John Reeny had been on the island also, hiding out because of an alarm about a posse of revenue men whom it was reported would raid the swamp jungles that week or the next. Seeing a stranger with his son, and having no confidence in the idiot's discretion, old Reeny watched, possessed with the notion that this was a revenue spy sent ahead as a harmless traveler. He did not speak to his son, nor did he let it be known that he was on the island. He stole near, keeping behind the house, because it was still broad daylight, and through a crack in the wall distinctly heard the stranger questioning Drake about himself, where his house was, what he did for a living and the like. This to the listener was confirmation strong as Holy Writ that the man was after no good. Reeny's record did not stand investigation, and he felt that to have it pass into cognizance of the law would be dangerous. Indignation seized him, merging into sullen fear and rage. What business had any man to

come spying after him? He'd put a stop to that in short order. Through his crack he could watch the fellow whom he took for a spy, and could see that he wrote every one of the idiot's answers down on a paper. His rage deepened, and he determined to get possession of that paper at all hazards. After making his simple preparations for the meal, Drake left the cabin to get fresh fish from his trap for broiling, and then had come the other's opportunity. Slipping back, the batten shutter noiselessly he had leaned in and shot the stranger through the head, springing in afterward and striking his victim again with the butt of his pistol with such force as to stave in his forehead. Then he possessed himself of the man's papers,—some one or other of which he felt convinced contained evidence which would send himself to jail,—his watch, and pocketbook, which contained a good sum of money.

He made good his escape before his son's return and hid in the swamp until, later, the storm came on and forced him to seek a safer place of shelter. The papers he could make nothing of, all being "writ in some furren lingo" so he threw them in the fire. The money he used, and the watch, a good gold one, but with no distinctive marks, was sold to a pawnbroker.

Old Reeny expressed no contrition for his deed, nor did he seem to feel any. To his own mind he seemed fully justified. His only motive in putting his confession on paper seemed to be for the protection of his son after his own death. He knew that Drake had thrown the body into the lake, at the bottom of which the quicksands would hold it, but he knew also that Trigg Bartram had been in the swamp, and on the island also, that day. How much Trigg might have seen he knew not, nor had any stir been made by him, either then or afterward. But the knowledge that Bartram had been about made him uneasy, because Drake was "a fool whar could just be toled out an' slaughtered" if ever inquiry should be instituted for the dead man. To protect Drake, the father, to whose brutality the poor creature's mental capacity was largely due, had laboriously penned this statement, to which he had affixed his signature, and under it, probably as attestation of its truth, a rude copy of the crucifix.

Irène turned the paper over to the blank side and there read his own name, spelt as the squatter was accustomed to spell his own, but with an "I" prefixed. Evidently the idiot had been instructed, in event of any emergency, to place the paper in his—Dr. Irène's—hands.

There was no mention of the breviary at all. In his hurried robbery of the body of his victim old Reeny had doubtless overlooked it.

The writing toward the last was straggling and uncertain, as though physical weakness had overcome the scribe. Irène folded the confession and pocketed it; then he rose and went back to his boat. He knew now all there was to be known.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### DR. IRÈNE'S DECISION.

So inwardly convinced had Irène been (despite his aversion to the thought) that Trigg Bartram was in some way implicated in the murder, that this complete vindication of him, on the heavier count, made his actual possession of the breviary and, probably, appropriation of the funds therein contained, appear, for the moment, almost venial. There were many ways in which Trigg might have become possessed of the book, the doctor reasoned, remembering that Trigg had known all the dwellers about the swamp from boyhood, and, doubtless, been on friendly terms with them. The idiot might have given him the book, or what was more likely, sold it to him.

True, there was the confession, duly signed with the name of Irène, to suggest ownership, and a definite destination; but the doctor, out of his wide professional experience, could understand how a man, pressed by poverty, ambitious,

and with an opening into that which might be prosperity, just ahead, might fall before a sudden and overmastering temptation. The tragedy of Trigg's death seemed to wall him off from harsh criticism—and then there was always his connection with the Manningham people to plead for him.

Irène took the boat back to its owner, reclaimed his horse, and rode home, getting in about moonrise. After supper he shut himself into his study, got out all his evidence and pieced together the story to his entire satisfaction. He laid the two confessions side by side, marveling how legitimate an evolution the brutal callousness of the one appeared from the selfish unfairness of the other, even to the torpid awakening to some sense of justice at the end, and the posthumous effort to scotch the wheels of wrongdoing. Here, too, John Reeny had proved heirship from the other.

Irène set himself to consider the situation in its practical aspects. He did not at all share his great-uncle's confidence in the spuriousness of the marriage certificate. The woman who could arrange, and push to its ultimate, a scheme of the sort would not be likely to be careless of details. The fact that she had made no legal stir

at the time doubtless arose from her having been deprived of her documentary evidence. Personally and verbally she might have harried the life of his ancestor, for aught he knew to the contrary. And this woman had lived for many years after Jean Irène's other marriage in Barbadoes. John Reeny had spoken of himself as being a sizable boy at the time of his grandmother's death.

If this matter should be ripped up what would come of it?

The young girl in Barbadoes had accepted her bereavement; had become convinced that her brother's continued silence and absence could be explained only by death. She had worn mourning for him and, doubtless, taken it off again. She had had masses said for his soul, and, in fullness of time, would inherit his fortune. In a recent letter, Père Emmanuel had spoken of her as blossoming into womanhood under propitious circumstances.

If this old scandal should be stirred up what would happen? A struggle with the law and the Church, which, if successful, would involve loss of name and fortune for an innocent young woman, and humiliation and pain for Hunter and for Hunter's sister, by reason of Trigg Bar-

tram's connection with the affair, and for himself endless worry, exertion, and probable reprobation as a bird sufficiently ill-disposed to call attention to this ancient befoulment of his own nest.

And who would be benefited? All the Irène's were dead save Terese and himself—for possible cousins in France did not count. Of the Reenys also not one was left. Even Trigg Bartram was beyond human calling to account. Who would be benefited?

Here Irène ran up against a conclusion that astonished him. *He himself would be benefited.* Grotesque as it appeared, he was Drake Reeny's heir, if this Charleston marriage should be valid. The money which had been sent over, the money which Bartram had, presumably, appropriated—even the big Barbadoes fortune—was all his, or would be, if the idiot's claim could be established.

It seemed ridiculous that he should be heir to the property of these strangers through that old time sin. It thrust a responsibility upon him which was unwelcome. He had no need of this fortune and no wish for it. Why should he bring discredit and pain upon people in a scramble after wealth which could not otherwise belong to

him. He would not. For him, sleeping dogs might lie.

One person only would he take fully into his confidence. To Anna Hunter he would show these things. She knew about the breviary and would not be likely to be satisfied with any unsatisfactory explanation of that which he wished to do with it. For Trigg Bartram's sake she would applaud his decisions in this matter and aid him to carry them into effect. Aid him also with her silence for all time.

The breviary, accompanied by a letter from himself embodying John Reeny's confession, must be sent out to Barbadoes without delay. Terese Irène had a right to knowledge of what had been her brother's fate.

Reeny's crucifix he would have restored, as much as might be, and present to Anna. To that he had a right—and also to these papers, which he would destroy.

And so it was, Anna fully approving that which her lover did, and even striking the match herself with which the holocaust was inaugurated. Irène slurred over Trigg's connections with the affair, and Anna herself forbore from comment. Her future, with this good man, seemed assured, and bright with truth, honor and

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the sanctity of love. And for her past—that too might rest forever with the wrong doing, the sorrow, the bitterness, and this strange secret of heritage, still and undisturbed, as rested the bodies of the dead men under the dark waters which surrounded Manitou Island.

THE END.

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